



SIKH PORTRAITS BY EUROPEAN ARTISTS

F.S.AIJAZUDDIN

With best regards from:- Surjit Singh Jeet.

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Sikh portraits by European artists





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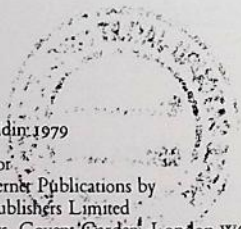
By F. S. Aijazuddin

Foreword by M. S. Randhawa, DSC, ICS (RETD)

PRESIDENT, ALL INDIA FINE ARTS & CRAFTS SOCIETY



1979
SOTHEBY PARKE BERNET
London · New York
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Karachi · Delhi



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Published 1979 for
Sotheby Parke Bernet Publications by
Philip Wilson Publishers Limited
Russell Chambers, Covent Garden, London WC2

Edition for the U.S.A. available from
Sotheby Parke Bernet Publications
c/o Biblio Distribution Centre
81 Adams Drive, Totowa, New Jersey 07512

ISBN 0 85667 059 6

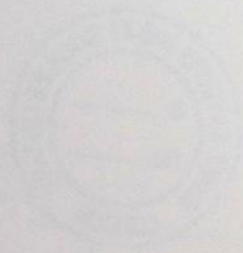
Edition for Pakistan by arrangement with
Oxford University Press, Karachi

Edition for India, Bangladesh, Burma and Sri Lanka,
by arrangement with Oxford University Press, Delhi

Filmset and printed in Great Britain by
BAS Printers Limited, Over Wallop, Hampshire
and bound by Mansell (Bookbinders) Limited, Witham, Essex

*For Momina and Mubarika
today, for their tomorrow*





Contents

List of Colour Plates	11
Prefatory note	12
Foreword	13
Preface	15
 PART I THE PRINCES	 19
1 Public Grandeur and Private Discomfort	21
2 A Lion's Lion	39
3 The Unquiet Spirit	51
4 The Magnificent Squire of Elveden	66
5 The Bus-stop at Lahore	91
 PART II THE SIKH COURT OF LAHORE	 99
Group I	100
Group II	102
Group III	108
Group IV	120
Group v and others	136
 Appendix 1	 145
Appendix 2	147
List of Monochrome Illustrations	149
Bibliography	152
Glossary	154
Index	155

List of Colour Plates

Plates I–VIII appear between pages 32 and 33; plates IX–XVII appear between pages 96 and 97

- I *Maharaja Ranjit Singh listening to the Granth being recited near the Golden Temple, Amritsar* by August Schoefft, Vienna, c. 1850
- II *Maharaja Sher Singh seated on the golden throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* by August Schoefft, Vienna, c. 1850
- III *Prince Dalip Singh, seated on a tree-trunk* by August Schoefft, Lahore, c. 1841
- IV *Maharaja Sher Singh seated, attended by his Council in the Lahore Fort* by August Schoefft, Lahore, 1841
- V *Rani Jindan seated on a cushion perhaps* by August Schoefft, Lahore, 1841
- VI *Maharaja Dalip Singh* by Franz Winterhalter, London, 1854
- VII *Maharaja Dalip Singh* by an unknown artist, London (?), c. 1863
- VIII *Maharaja Dalip Singh dressed for a State function* by Captain Goldingham, London (?), c. 1875
- IX *The Court of Lahore* by August Schoefft, c. 1850–1855
- X–XVII Details from *The Court of Lahore* by August Schoefft

Prefatory Note

All bibliographical references in the text have been abbreviated to the name of the author and to the year of publication. The publications are listed in the Bibliography.

Foreword

During the first half of the nineteenth century a number of European adventurers came to the Punjab. Some came to seek their fortune, others just out of curiosity to see the country, its people and a remarkable ruler. Out of these travellers, Hugel, Burnes, Vigne and the botanist Jacquemont have left perceptive accounts of the Punjab and its ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Among those attracted by the lure of the romantic East was August Schoefft, a Hungarian painter. Schoefft's grandfather, Joseph, also a painter, was born in Germany and migrated to Budapest in Hungary where he purchased a house. The street in which the house was situated is still called Kepiro Utea, i.e. the Street of Painters after the profession of Joseph. It was here that August was born in 1809. In 1828, he studied art in Vienna, followed by seven years' travel in Italy, France and Switzerland. In 1835 he returned to Budapest and lived in a hotel where he painted and sold portraits and landscapes. There he fell in love with the daughter of a penniless officer, whom he married against the wishes of his father. This event set him off on his travels again and, accompanied by his wife, he visited Odessa and Constantinople. He passed through Arabia, Persia and India sketching picturesque characters. On 14 November 1841, Schoefft reached Lahore, was accepted as a guest by Martin Honigberger, a Rumanian who attended the then Maharaja, Sher Singh, and painted portraits of Sher Singh and his principal courtiers.

It seems that Schoefft's paintings were acquired by or for Maharaja Dalip Singh who lived as a congenial exile in England. One of Dalip Singh's daughters, Princess Bamba Jindan, married a certain Colonel Sutherland and settled in Lahore. Sutherland was a well-known doctor who enjoyed esteem among those of his profession. Mrs Sutherland died in Lahore at the age of eighty-eight on 10 March 1957, bequeathing her property, including Schoefft's paintings to her secretary, Pir Karim Baksh Supra, who sold them to the Government of Pakistan. Through these paintings, as well as through

contemporary accounts of travellers, F. S. Aijazuddin reconstructs the history of the Punjab during the Sikh period. He himself is a scion of the famous Fakir family who enjoyed the trust and confidence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He is therefore not only a scholar and an art critic but brings to the present study a personal enthusiasm for the period. Amongst the colour plates are two remarkable paintings by Schoefft which provide us with a glimpse of the courts of Ranjit Singh and Sher Singh. One of them depicts Ranjit Singh on a visit to Darbar Sahib at Amritsar where he is shown seated on a cushion listening to *granthis*. The boy playing near him and holding a hawk, previously identified as Dalip Singh, is shown by Aijazuddin to be a war orphan. Schoefft records that war orphans were maintained by Ranjit Singh and given half their father's salary until they reached the age of fifteen. This type of charity by the Sikh ruler, formerly overlooked, is here emphasised for the first time.

Aijazuddin's prime concern, however, is with a detailed analysis of Schoefft's large painting, sixteen feet by ten feet, entitled *The Court of Lahore*. This contains over a hundred separate figures and is divided by Aijazuddin into five main groups. He provides biographical notes on forty-nine of the principal characters as well as comments on the dress of Akalis, troopers, falconers, gatekeepers, servants and others. Apart from its importance from the point of view of the history of the Punjab, this remarkable painting presents in a coherent whole the *dramatis personae* who succeeded the great Ranjit Singh. Unable to control a turbulent army which could not find an outlet for its energies, they were themselves destroyed in a fratricidal struggle. The army, though led by treacherous generals, fought bravely and almost defeated the British forces at Ferozeshah and Chellianwala. It was ultimately defeated at Gujrat in 1849 and the Punjab was annexed by the British.

Aijazuddin continues the history of the Sikh dynasty by following the careers of Dalip Singh and Rani Jindan during their eclipse in India and exile in Europe. They are vividly illustrated in further works by Beechey, Schoefft, Goldingham, Winterhalter, Richmond and even Queen Victoria herself. Here in fact is a history of the Sikh rulers from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century presented with vividness and feeling. Written in a witty, sparkling style, this work is an outstanding contribution to art history by a scholar who combines both a knowledge and love of the Punjab with acute observation and unusual aesthetic sensibility.

M.S.Randhawa

Preface

I met Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his relatives by accident. Our family had known them for years, one might say with truth for generations. I was introduced to them in 1965 by my father, Fakir Waheeduddin, while he was preparing a family memoir¹ on the relationship between the Sikh Maharaja and his Muslim courtiers—the three Fakir brothers Azizuddin, Nuruddin and Imamuddin. My father needed a copy of the ivory portrait of our lineal ancestor Fakir Nuruddin and, as I was studying in London at the time, he directed me to obtain it from the Victoria and Albert Museum. Dutifully, I called on the Keeper of the Indian Section in the Museum and was embarrassed to discover that I knew far less about our family friends than I ought to have known and the Keeper knew far more than I had imagined.

The Keeper, Mr (later Dr) W. G. Archer had just sent the manuscript of his *Paintings of the Sikhs* to press, a pioneering assessment of that very period of Punjab history during which the Fakir brothers had attained such unexpected prominence. In his monograph, W. G. Archer discussed the role of the Sikhs as patrons of painting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and examined in considerable detail the influence such patronage had had on the output of local Punjabi artists working in the hills and the plains. He also recounted the circumstances in which the Sikhs, posing often with deceptive nonchalance, were portrayed by amateur and professional European artists venturing into the Punjab in the twilight years of its existence as a separate kingdom.

While the work of local artists could claim a certain domestic authenticity, it was in fact through the sketches and paintings of these European artists that the flamboyant cavalier-like personalities of the Sikh court at Lahore came to life for their European contemporaries—and for me, generations later.

¹ *The Real Ranjit Singh* (Karachi, 1965).

Through Emily Eden's portraits I had become familiar with important Sikh rulers and rajas. Published as lithographs under the title *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* (London, 1844), each of her sketches was a perceptive character study. She contained each subject within a separate composition, isolating him from his peers, and with subtlety exposed his volatile individuality.

Similarly through the work of another amateur artist, Charles Hardinge, who visited Lahore in 1846 as A.D.C. to his father Lord Hardinge, then Governor-General, I encountered newer personalities such as the young Maharaja Dalip Singh, who had matured physically as well as politically since Miss Eden's earlier visit in 1838. Hardinge had amplified the range of his *Recollections of India* (London, 1847) by augmenting his portraits with views of various historical sites in the Punjab and Kashmir. He included views of Lahore, the crenellated walls of its Fort, the marble *baradari* or pavilion within the Fort associated with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the Hazuri Bagh pavilion frequented by Maharaja Sher Singh, every scene the setting for some traumatic incident which had occurred during this period of Sikh rule.

It was however through the oil paintings of August Schoefft, the Hungarian painter, that both the characters and the back-cloth of the drama seemed to be brought together to maximum effect. In 1855, August Schoefft had completed a monumental composition portraying the Sikh Darbar, to which he gave the title *Der Hof von Lahor* (The Court of Lahore) when it was first exhibited in Vienna that year. In this he presented paragraphs of Punjab history compressed into one coherent pictorial essay.

This painting, together with smaller portraits and landscapes by Schoefft and other European artists, was acquired by Maharaja Dalip Singh and his family and the collection was ultimately bought by the Government of Pakistan in 1957 from the legatee of Princess Bamba Sutherland, Dalip Singh's daughter. The collection was displayed appropriately in the Lahore Fort, in a delightful gallery designed specially for it, the décor echoing the arches and pink embroidered blinds seen in Schoefft's darbar picture.

For any student of Sikh art-history, as I had by then irrevocably become, the attraction of the Princess Bamba collection was irresistible. Here was a wealth of pictorial material, spanning more than a century, from the time the great Maharaja ruled the Punjab from Lahore until the last of his line died there in 1957, paralleling the century of association between our families. It contained paintings showing Ranjit Singh in darbar and at prayers, portraits of Sher

Singh enthroned and in council, informal sketches of Rani Jindan, and poignant glimpses of a waning Dalip Singh and his hapless children—each, in Chekov's words, 'the subject of a short story', each demanding a separate biographical appreciation by a family friend. The first part of my study, I hope, fulfils that demand.

The second part concentrates on the Sikh Court as it appears in Schoefft's painting and is in consonance with Schoefft's original purpose. The catalogue to the 1855 exhibition had contained brief biographical and explanatory notes to most of the figures identified by Schoefft. It was logical, therefore, when appraising the painting in detail to maintain the spirit of Schoefft's approach, to provide fuller information on each character and to explain in certain cases why Schoefft should have included some of them at all. The exhibition catalogue was not only the key to *The Court of Lahore* painting but also the essential clue to Schoefft's basic intentions when composing the painting.

Dr Mildred Archer's willingness to search for and obtain a copy of the Schoefft catalogue was as characteristic an act as that of her husband's generous and consistent encouragement of my research into Sikh art history. The 'single rose' of my earliest meeting with Dr Archer in the Victoria and Albert Museum has indeed since become a garden.

Dr M. S. Randhawa, equally a mentor and a friend, has unhesitatingly contributed a scholarly foreword. It has meant more to me than I can express.

To Jane Boulenger, Anne Jackson and Philip Wilson of Philip Wilson Publishers I shall remain permanently grateful. Our collaboration on my earlier book *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum* was conducted from a distance, across continents. No-one could have understood more sensitively the aspirations of an author for his first book, and no-one could have done more than they have to fulfil them so gloriously. Their achievement with its successor is no less.

For moments of communion on the subject with Mr Khalid Iqbal, Professor of Painting, National College of Arts, Lahore; for the incentive to start work on the Princess Bamba Collection and constructive assistance thereafter from Mr Ahmad Nabi Khan, Superintendent, Department of Archaeology, Lahore; to Mr Peter Egger, formerly Lecturer in German, Punjab University, Lahore for translating the original catalogue of Schoefft's exhibition; and to Mr Mohammad Sarwar who typed the manuscript; to all of them, I have pleasure in recording my gratitude.

PREFACE

I am obliged also to Mr Ishtiaque Khan, Director, Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan, for permission to reproduce the portraits from the Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort Museum, and to Mr Zafar Ahmad for taking the colour photographs there.

Portraits from the Royal Collection, Osborne House, and from the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, are reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen. Grateful acknowledgements are made also to the India Office Library and Records, London, the Punjab Records Office, Lahore and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, for permission to reproduce items from their collections.

To my darling wife Shahnaz, I shall always be deeply indebted for her continual encouragement and for taking the trouble to read almost all the books I have on the subject in order to understand me better.

Lahore, 1977

F.S.Aijazuddin



PART I

THE PRINCES

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CHAPTER ONE

Public Grandeur and Private Discomfort

Of all the numerous enduring images of the peacock splendour of the Sikh Darbar, none—not even the contemporary miniature paintings of that period, nor the pen-portraits left behind by gifted writers such as William Osborne or his aunt, Miss Emily Eden, or G. T. Vigne or Dr Martin Honigberger—can match the sweeping flourish with which the painter August Theodor Schoefft (1809–1888) brought to life on a single canvas the hierarchy which was responsible for the establishment of the Sikh State in the Punjab, and also for its ultimate disintegration.

A skilled painter in oils, this enterprising young Hungarian¹ came to India in 1838 at the age of twenty-nine. Within two years he is known to have travelled from Bombay, the port of his entry into India, to Madras where, in September 1839, he completed as a commission full-length portraits of the Nawab of Arcot, Ghulam Muhammad Ghaus, and of his uncle, Prince Azim Jah.² Six months later, he was in Calcutta, from where he advertised his intention of proceeding westwards, to Lahore along the sinuous Ganges course as far as Cawnpore and then along the Jamuna passing through Agra and Delhi.

At Delhi, Schoefft stopped for a while to execute portraits of the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar (r. 1837–1857) and of his two sons, Mirza Mughal and Mirza Jawan Bakht.³ The date of his departure from Delhi has not

¹ Honigberger (1852), 171, described him as 'a German'; Foster (1930), 93, as 'presumably German by birth'; and Archer (1966), 44, as 'a Hungarian by extraction'.

² Foster (1930), 93.

³ Khan (1961), 8, Catalogue Nos. 11, 12 and 13. For an account by the Russian Prince Soltykoff of his visit to the Mughal Emperor in Delhi in November, 1842, see Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 125–128.

been recorded but it can be assumed that at some time in the last quarter of 1841 Schoefft reached Lahore alone, having left his wife behind in British territory.⁴ He contacted Dr Martin Honigberger, who was practising as a physician at the Court, and became his guest.

For the Sikhs and for their ruler, Maharaja Sher Singh, the accepted son of Ranjit Singh, Schoefft could not have come at a better time. News of his arrival reached the Maharaja who was at Amritsar and a summons was impatiently issued to Dr Honigberger to produce his guest before the Darbar as soon as possible. On their arrival, Honigberger recalled: 'It happened that one of the principal Sikh priests, named Baii Goormuck Singh, was present, and the maharajah desired Herr Schöff to furnish him with a specimen of his abilities, by sketching a portrait of the baii; which he accordingly did, in pencil, and the likeness was a striking one. The result was, that the maharajah and several of the principal persons of the court sat to him for their portraits, and Herr Schöff accordingly met with great respect and consideration'.⁵

Schoefft's particular 'skill in painting historical subjects . . . with astonishing quickness' had been remarked upon by the *Calcutta Courier* of 1840,⁶ and this gift was to stand him in good stead during his sojourn with the Sikhs. Even though he must have been working with speed, it is unlikely that Schoefft completed more than a few paintings from the numerous sketches and studies prepared, while at Amritsar and at Lahore. Some of these paintings seem to have been retained by Maharaja Sher Singh. Honigberger confirms this by saying that 'Herr Schöff had kept copies of these portraits'.⁷ A year after Schoefft's departure from Lahore, Prince Soltykoff visiting Sher Singh in March 1842 remembered being shown by the proud Maharaja 'five or six portraits in oils without frames, the work of Shoefft, the German painter'.⁸

Schoefft remained in Amritsar for only a few days, and in Lahore certainly not

⁴ Honigberger (1852), 171, mentions that Schoefft 'accompanied by his lady, visited the East Indian Presidencies'.

⁵ Honigberger (1852), 171, 172.

⁶ Foster (1930), 93.

⁷ Honigberger (1852), 172.

⁸ Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 103. It is interesting to note that seven years later, Dr John Login (appointed as tutor to Maharaja Dalip Singh and also Governor of the Citadel at Lahore) should unearth the portrait of Queen Victoria painted by Emily Eden and presented by her

later than the summer of 1842. After leaving the Punjab, Schoefft returned to Europe through Afghanistan, Persia and Egypt.⁹ Whether he took his copies, drawings and notes with him to Europe or had them transported there by his wife, who must have returned to Europe separately, is not known. It is certain, though, that at some time before 1852, when he was, according to Dr Honigberger, in St Petersburg,¹⁰ Russia, he completed his *tour de force*—the painting of the Sikh Darbar in Lahore. (See Colour plate IX, facing p. 96, and Appendix 1.)

Before Schoefft could reach the Punjab, many of the Sikh personalities he was to include in his composition had already died—the ‘Lion of the Punjab’, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in June, 1839; Maharaja Kharak Singh and Nau Nehal Singh, father and son, within a day of each other in November, 1840. A decade later, before he was to leave for St Petersburg the Sikh Kingdom had collapsed, the Punjab lay annexed and many of those he had met and sketched were no more—the hospitable Maharaja Sher Singh, his endearing son Pratap Singh, Raja Dhian Singh and his equally handsome brother Suchet Singh, and also the two Fakir brothers Azizuddin and Nuruddin. The European mercenaries serving Ranjit Singh had scattered, Rani Jindan having escaped from Fort Chunar near Benares was now in a different class of exile, and her son the deposed Maharaja Dalip Singh was in gilded captivity.

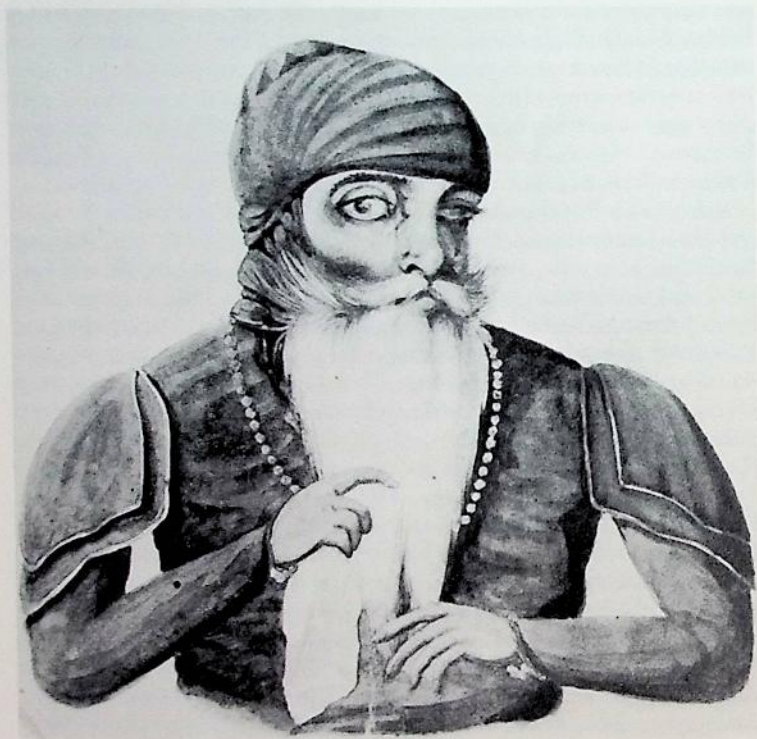
To supplement his notes, Schoefft had available to him the evocative accounts, some of them illustrated, written by intrepid and observant visitors to the Punjab. William Osborne (Military Secretary to the Governor-General, Lord Auckland) had returned from his mission to Ranjit Singh’s Court and Camp by the time Schoefft had landed at Bombay in 1838. When Osborne’s account from his diaries was published in 1840 a year after Ranjit Singh’s death, it contained sixteen lithographs from sketches made by Osborne, including two which Schoefft may have used to his advantage.¹¹

brother Lord Auckland to Maharaja Ranjit Singh in December 1838, but not mention the oil portraits seen by Soltykoff. See Eden (1866), I, 285, for a first-hand account of the preparation of her painting of the Queen for presentation, and Login (1890), 168, for its subsequent discovery in the royal *toshakhana* at the Fort.

⁹ I am indebted to Dr W. G. Archer for this information.

¹⁰ Honigberger (1852), 171.

¹¹ One was of Fakir Azizuddin and the other of Sher Singh. See Osborne (1840), opp. 69 and 64 respectively.



Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839). Drawing by G. T. Vigne, Punjab, 1837.
India Office Library and Records, London

In 1837, Vigne, an itinerant geologist, visited Ranjit Singh and published a lithograph of the Maharaja later in that year.¹² Schoefft borrowed Vigne's likeness, tilting the figure slightly forward to the right to show the Maharaja bending to accept the *nazar* offered by Raja Gulab Singh. In all other respects, the essentials of the Vigne portrait—the prominent eye, the soft plain turban and the

handkerchief gripped in one of the Maharaja's hands—were retained in Schoefft's version.

Schoefft's prime resources remained his notes, aided by the memory and the imagination of a more mature artist. He retrieved from the crevices of his conscious recollection and sub-conscious impression a glittering image of the Sikhs as they would have wished to have been remembered—as 'a fine looking set of men'.¹³ What Osborne had put in words, Schoefft proceeded to illustrate in oils.

For his theme, Schoefft chose the celebration of the Dussehra festival in Lahore, an occasion when all the Sikh Court could be expected to be assembled together in one vast concourse. Normally, the festival was celebrated at Amritsar, and certainly in the three years preceding his death Ranjit Singh had convened the festivities there.¹⁴ The ceremony was in abeyance during Kharak Singh's brief reign, but was resumed in the first year after Sher Singh's assumption of power, when it was held in the Shalimar Gardens just outside the city of Lahore.¹⁵

Like all traditional ceremonies, the Dussehra gathering retained a certain timelessness in its rituals, regardless of their location. The description in the Court records for the 1837 celebrations, held on 11 October in Amritsar, could apply equally to the later Lahore gathering: 'all went to the *Kotha Dussehra* wala on the backs of well-decorated elephants and well-equipped horses with golden saddles and harnesses. All the glorious chieftains, glorious Sahibs, special attendants, officers of the platoons, *Khass Ghorcharas*, officers of horsemen . . . secured everlasting felicity by presenting *Nazars* on the *Dussehra* day'.¹⁶

A dilemma faced Schoefft, requiring him to choose between the traditional setting of Amritsar if he was to include Ranjit Singh in the composition, or Lahore if he was to exclude him and to depict factually only Sher Singh. Schoefft, painting as he was some years after the event and for a different purpose, could

¹² Reproduced Archer (1966), fig. 68.

¹³ Osborne (1840), 74.

¹⁴ See Suri (1961), 311, 379 and 530 for an account of the Dussehra for the year 1836, 1837 and 1838 respectively.

¹⁵ Qadir (1917), 85. Steinbach (1846), 33, claims that the first Dussehra gathering during Sher Singh's reign was convened at Amritsar.

¹⁶ Suri (1961), 379.

afford to sacrifice historical accuracy for spectacular effect. Amritsar in any case could hardly have appealed to him, particularly after his unfortunate experience with the irascible Akalis.¹⁷ Nor did the Shalimar Gardens which lacked a dramatic association with the Sikh Court. He preferred the Lahore Fort. It symbolised in its majestic presence a natural affinity with Sher Singh, such as the Golden Temple at Amritsar held for the most famous of the Sikh Maharajas, Ranjit Singh. Schoefft was to portray Ranjit Singh separately listening to the *Granth* at Amritsar; he therefore compromised by presenting both Sher Singh and his illustrious predecessor together at Lahore.

The specific site in the Fort chosen by Schoefft to serve as a backcloth was the small rectangular enclosure between the Khilat Khana on its eastern side and the Summan Burj, which contained the royal sleeping apartments, on its western side. This had been used regularly by the courtiers as a point of assembly while they waited for the Maharaja to emerge from the Summan Burj to take his place in the *baradari*¹⁸ for the initial audience of the day. This white marble appendage to the Summan Burj had been habitually used by Ranjit Singh, and remained associated with his memory long after his death.

Looking at the same site today from Schoefft's vantage point, standing as he must have been in the north-eastern corner of the square, with the Kala Burj immediately to his left and the northern wall of the Fort extending to the Summan Burj beyond on his right, one can recognise the *baradari*, the doorway to the Summan Burj itself in the distance and the arched entrance in the far wall. As might be expected from an artist who had completed the painting some years later away from the scene from the sketches he had made on the spot, in one or two minor details Schoefft has sacrificed realism for neatness and artistic effect. The *baradari*, for example, he painted to seem taller than it really was and gave it three

¹⁷ For an account in Dr Honigberger's words of Schoefft's maltreatment by the Akalis at Amritsar, see pp. 32-36.

¹⁸ Described by Vogel (1911), 51, as 'an open pavilion which dates from the reign of Ranjit Singh and was used by him as a *kachahri* or court of justice. Its general appearance is not ungraceful, but its Sikh origin is clearly indicated by certain details such as the combination of white marble and red sandstone brackets, and that of marble trellis screens with red sandstone posts (Arabic *mutakka*) in the ornamental railing which is placed on the roof of the building. The curious frescoes on the north wall, related to the legend of Krishna, are evidently the work of one of Ranjit Singh's court-painters'. Schoefft has omitted the north wall and made the verandah open on both sides. The frescoes are still visible today.



The marble *baradari* in the Lahore Fort, as it appears today

arches instead of the five it still has. On the rear wall, he included a diminutive group of sentries, who in reality might have found it difficult to balance themselves on the narrow ledge that ran along the top of the wall. Behind them, Schoefft painted a minaret and to the left of it the domed roof of a small shrine. Perhaps he intended to represent the shrine constructed by Rani Chand Kaur, the wife of Kharak Singh, which was situated on the other side of the wall, but the roof of the shrine was too low to be visible over the high wall. As for the minaret, it is not clear to which building it could have belonged, for the Badshahi Masjid minarets were not in Schoefft's line of vision, and the Moti Masjid of the Fort which lay diagonally in that direction did not have any minarets. He also omitted the deep well which can still be seen in the eastern side of the courtyard, and covered the spot instead by a compact group of Sikh irregular cavalry, ranged behind their commander, Lal Singh, on the left of the painting.

The sizes of the figures of the mounted Sher Singh and the animal carcasses in the immediate foreground, overshadowing and dominating the canvas, have been given a different interpretation during a recent discussion of this picture.¹⁹ Sher Singh rather than Ranjit Singh has been identified as the real hero of the picture, and the occasion has been considered to be the return of Sher Singh from

¹⁹ Archer (1966), 48–49.

a hunt. Such a contention regarding the purpose and intent of the picture is not implausible. Sher Singh had been excited by Schoefft's talent and what better compliment could Schoefft have proffered in return than to make his royal client the centre of attraction, to show the sparkling solitaire diamond secure in a setting of gold. But is such a contention entirely valid? Was it really Schoefft's intention to give Sher Singh the dominant place and the rest of the Sikh Court (including Ranjit Singh) a minor supporting role in this picturesque tableau?

It has already been seen that when Schoefft began his work the Sikh Kingdom of the Punjab had fallen. The Sikh personalities had faded into history. Schoefft worked from his own sketches as well as from portraits of the various personalities described or portrayed by contemporary authors. He crowded his canvas with over a hundred separate figures,²⁰ forty-nine of which he himself identified in catalogue notes to the picture. The remainder, though not known, were nevertheless distinguishable as individuals he had encountered during his stay in the Punjab. To determine whether there was a deeper meaning intended by Schoefft in the placing of each individual figure in relation to that of his neighbours and whether this juxtaposition was a conscious attempt by him to illustrate the corrosive undercurrents of alliances (some secret, others less so) at the royal court, one must examine the painting more closely.

Dividing the substantial canvas into manageable segments, five basic groupings of the principal characters emerge. The first, placed in the centre of the *baradari*, contains Maharaja Ranjit Singh, seated with his immediate legitimate relations and their spiritual confidants. At their feet but standing upright is the second group, dominated by the Dogra family—Raja Dhian Singh, Wazir to both Ranjit Singh and Sher Singh but uncharacteristically ignoring both masters; Raja Suchet Singh, the youngest brother and rival in fashion to Sher Singh; and the young boy favourite, Hira Singh, who in an unlikely gesture of rapport returns Sher Singh's left-handed salutation. In their shadows hover Fakir Azizuddin (Ranjit Singh's Foreign Minister), Dina Nath who controlled the royal exchequer, and Lal Singh, soon to replace Dhian Singh as Wazir.

To their left in a third group stands Ajit Singh, scornfully turning his back on his Dogra rivals. He stares fixedly at his victim Sher Singh. Before him stand the Muslim Governor of Peshawar and his sons, and the vanquished Nawab

²⁰ Similar to the crowded compositions by the British painter W. P. Frith (1817–1909), whose popular successes included 'Ramsgate sands', 'Derby Day' and 'The Railway Station'.

Zulfiqar Khan of Multan. Also looking up at Sher Singh is his medical attendant, Dr Honigberger, beside whom stand Mouton, De la Roche and De la Font. Sher Singh's young son Pratap Singh rides behind him, and shadowing the child is his assassin, Lehna Singh.

Returning to the *baradari*, in the right-hand section one sees the fourth group which includes more European mercenaries—Allard, Avitabile, Ventura, Foulkes, Steinbach and Van Cortlandt. Seated before them are Sham Singh Attariwala, and the fakir, Haridas, who taxes the composure of his neighbour Fakir Nuruddin (physician to Ranjit Singh).

Outside the *baradari*, collected in a horizontal fifth composition, are General Court, the inebriated Meka Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Attar Singh Sindhanwalia, and Misr Beli Ram (keeper of the royal *toshakhana*) preceded by his assistant.

From an examination of this collage of separate introverted groupings it is clear that Schoefft's purpose was to place each character, rather than emphasise any one specific person, in his significant place amongst his historical peers. Schoefft resurrected on one canvas the self-destructive lemming-like policies of the ruling sardars and presented their *darbar* as a fiery meteor, glowing for a final moment before it exploded into fragments. He deliberately composed his picture to reflect the paradox inherent in the Sikh kingdom, the contradictory circumstances under which devout Muslims and practising Hindus served a Sikh Maharaja with a devotion that the Sikhs themselves could not rival. The loyalty of these communities, though, remained, like some sacred thread of friendship, attached to his person only. With his death, the thread broke and each faction felt released from any past obligations. No one can doubt the contribution made by these subordinate communities to the success of Ranjit Singh's rule, but they remained at all times cyphers. No Muslim who was not a member of the Fakir family gained prominence; no Hindu other than the family members of Dina Nath and Beli Ram held any significant position of trust. The kingdom of the Punjab was truly the person of the diminutive Maharaja. He could have claimed with justifiable truth 'L'État c'est moi!' He could have, but he did not. Ranjit Singh was too shrewd to overstate the obvious. He managed to maintain a balance between the various religious communities and gave their uneasy alliance a superficial but visible semblance of unity.

Ranjit Singh's attitude to his own religion was analysed by Osborne who wrote: 'He was a devout believer in the doctrines, and a punctual observer of the

ceremonies, of his religion. The Granth, the sacred book of the Sikhs, was constantly read to him, and he must have been familiar with the moral precepts it inculcated'. Osborne quickly corrected the balance, lest it had tipped too generously and undeservingly in his subject's favour. He knew Ranjit Singh too well to allow his readers to gain only an impression of attentive piety; he also drew attention to the darker side of Ranjit's character: 'Nothing could be more different than the precepts of Nanac and the practices of Runjeet. By the former were enjoined, devotion to God, and peace towards men. The life of Runjeet was an incessant career of war and strife, and he indulged without remorse or shame in sensualities of the most revolting description.'²¹

Ranjit, though, was a man of his age, yet like all great men was destined to endure beyond its span. In his religion, as in his politics, Ranjit Singh was known to keep his true intentions secret until the time was right for action, then he would act with speed and decisiveness. For historians and his biographers he left an example of this tantalising ambiguity—how else can one explain the splendid, and undoubtedly accurate, anecdote of his reply to Fakir Azizuddin's question as to why he, Ranjit, a Sikh, should have paid an inordinately high price for a manuscript copy of the *Quran*: 'God intended me to look upon all religions with one eye; that is why he took away the light from the other'.²² Fakir Azizuddin never forgot this remark, and never remembered, even when pressed by a British officer, which eye of the Maharaja had lost its light.

Schoefft executed a second composition showing Ranjit Singh listening to the *Granth* being read to him at Amritsar (Colour Plate I). Ranjit Singh was depicted seated on a large cushion, wearing the Koh-i-noor set in an amulet on his right arm. Beside him sit the *bhais* or priests, who, in addition to the immediate members of his family and his favourite, Raja Hira Singh, were the only ones accorded the privilege of sitting in his presence.²³ The figure seated immediately behind the Maharaja is Kharak Singh, and standing beside him, partially blocked by an Akali, stands Sher Singh.²⁴

²¹ Osborne (1840), xli–xlii.

²² Quoted in Singh (1962), 7.

²³ Osborne (1840), 72; also noticed by Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 59–60.

²⁴ In Archer (1966), 48, the figure seated directly behind Ranjit Singh has been identified with Sher Singh. Compare however the standing helmeted figure with the equestrian sketch of Sher Singh reproduced in Osborne (1840), opp. 64.



Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839) seated. Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, Lahore, December, 1838. Author's collection

The young child who holds up a hawk in the right foreground is of interest. This child was depicted running ahead of Sher Singh's horse in the Darbar picture and appears again in the far right corner of the sketch of Sher Singh in Council. This little gambolling figure is not Dalip Singh²⁵ but the son of one of Ranjit Singh's sardars who had fallen in battle.

Of greater and more sinister significance to Ranjit Singh, to unsuspecting travellers and particularly to Schoefft personally (as will shortly be seen) were the surly Akalis grouped on the left,²⁶ standing guard over Ranjit Singh and the sanctity of the Golden Temple precincts. For their part in the drama that will forever be associated with this picture by Schoefft the eye-witness account of Dr Martin Honigberger, who had accompanied Schoefft to Amritsar, must be quoted. He explained the circumstances leading up to the incident thus:

In the centre of the city of Umritsir, is a gigantic reservoir of water, from the midst of which rises a magnificent temple, where the Granth (the holy book of the Sikhs) is read day and night. Around this sheet of water are the houses of the maharajah, the ministers, sirdars, and other wealthy inhabitants. The square itself is called Durbar Saheb. At the time of Runjeet Sing and Sheer Sing, the scene which presented itself at this temple, when the court was at Umritsir, was of the most brilliant description, and at certain periods all the notabilities of the Punjab were to be seen collected together in all the splendour of oriental pageantry. During our stay at Umritsir it happened that the inhabitants gave an invitation to the court to visit the sacred temple at night time, when it was gorgeously illuminated; and Sheer Sing honoured me with his commands that we should accompany him, sending us a richly caparisoned elephant for our accommodation. Sheer Singh inquired of my friend, Herr Schöff, if he could take for him a drawing of that brilliant scene. He answered in the affirmative, but proposed to the maharajah that it would be better if the scene was sketched under the effect of day-light instead of the imperfect one of the illumination. He was accordingly ordered to adopt that suggestion.

A programme was made for the next day. Honigberger continues:

²⁵ Archer making this identification mistakenly describes Dalip Singh as being 'only three years old in 1839' Archer (1966), 48. Dalip Singh was three years old in 1841.

²⁶ For a first-hand and subjective account of the Akalis by Lt. Col. Steinbach, see Part II, No. 50.



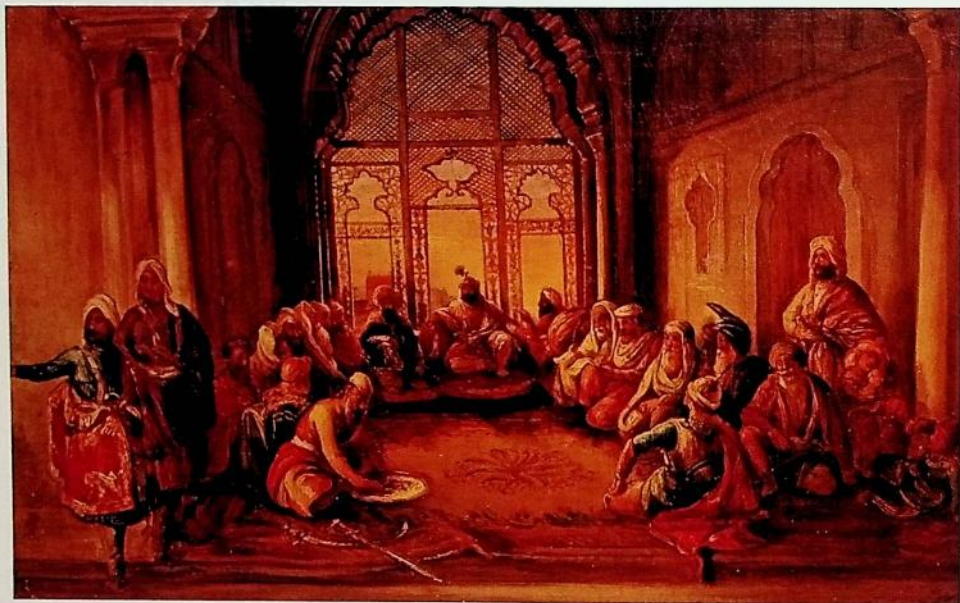
1 Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839) listening to the Granth being recited near the Golden Temple, Amritsar. Painting in oils by August Schoefft (1809–1888). Vienna, c. 1850, from a sketch made by Schoefft in Amritsar, 1841. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort



11 Maharaja Sher Singh (1807–1843) seated on the golden throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839). Painting in oils by August Schoefft (1809–1888). Vienna, c. 1850, from a preliminary study made by Schoefft in Lahore, 1841. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort



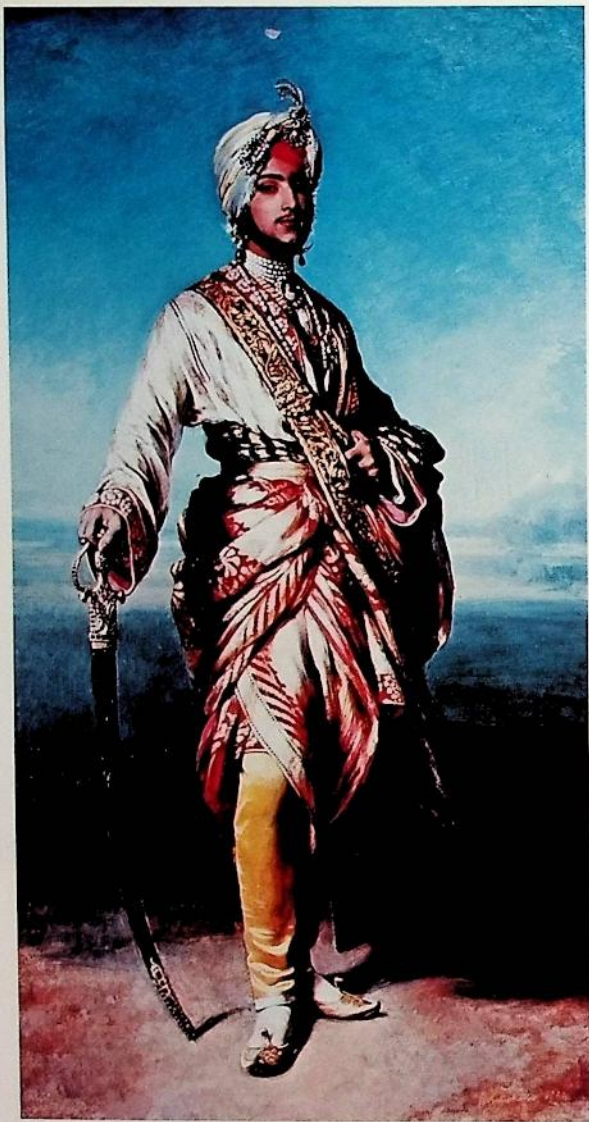
111 *Prince (later Maharaja) Dalip Singh (1838–1893), seated on a tree-trunk. Painting in oils by August Schoefft (1809–1888). Lahore, 1841. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort*



iv *Maharaja Sher Singh (1807–1843) seated, attended by his Council in the Lahore Fort. A sketch in oils by August Schoefft (1809–1888). Lahore, 1841. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort*



v *Rani Jindan (1817–1863) seated on a cushion.* A sketch in oils perhaps by August Schoefft (1809–1888). Lahore, 1841. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort



v1 *Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838–1893)*. Painting in oils by Franz Winterhalter (1805–1873). London, 1854. Royal Collection, Osborne House



vii *Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838–1893)*. Painting in oils by an unknown artist.
London (?), c. 1863. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort



viii *Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838–1893) dressed for a State function. Painting in oils by Capt. Goldingham. London (?), c. 1875. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort*

On the following morning we went to the house of the Baii Goormuck Singh,²⁷ who had promised, on the previous evening, to send a servant to point out to us the most elevated terrace in the square (which was in the mansion of Runjeet Sing), from which Herr Schöffl could get a view of the temple and the surrounding buildings; on this place he prepared his atelier. He occupied the whole of the day in sketching the scene, and on the following day he also went there, but alone, to continue his work. About noon, having that morning received some newspapers from my native place, Kronstadt, I went to him, and he desired me to read to him the news whilst he was painting. About an hour before sunset, his work was nearly finished, and as the court had already departed for Lahore, whither we wished also to proceed immediately, he requested me to go to our quarters and to procure some boxes in which he could enclose his paintings. Our quarters were outside the city, in a garden formerly belonging to the prince No-Nehal Sing. When I reached home I immediately forwarded to him a horse and servants, as he had told me he should finish his painting within an hour after I had left him.

Honigberger, when leaving his companion, little expected the events that were to follow:

Herr Schöffl was a great smoker, and attracted attention in Umritsir from his scarcely ever being seen abroad without having a cigar in his mouth. Now smoking is considered by the Nahungs and the Sikhs as sinful, or rather criminal; more especially in or near such a holy place as their chief sanctuary; Herr Schöffl was aware of this, and therefore studiously avoided smoking whilst engaged in taking this sketch. It happened however, that, as is customary with painters, he now and then in the course of the work placed one of his pencils in his mouth, in order to keep it separate from those in the left hand, whilst using another with the right. This was observed by those who stood watching his operations from beneath the terrace, and they imagined, in consequence, that he was smoking. The rumour first spread about in whispers one to another, and as the impression became confirmed, a general indignation manifested itself; and loud exclamations were soon heard, that the feringhee (frank) was committing sacrilege by smoking in their sacred place.

²⁷ Bhai Gurmukh Singh was the son of Sant Singh, the custodian of the Golden Temple. See Part II, No. 42 for a biographical note.

The *dénouement* was inevitable:

The people speedily increased in numbers, and a clamorous mob soon surrounded the palace. The artist was at first unconscious of the cause of the gathering, but he soon became aware by their shouts and threats, that he was in some way the object of their fury, and that he was consequently in a dangerous position. He had no sooner, however, made up his mind that his best policy would be to effect his escape, if possible, unperceived; when some of the ringleaders of the mob, who had made their way through the palace, rushed upon the terrace, and attempted to seize him. Being a strong and vigorous man, he succeeded in wrenching himself from their grasp, and made his way to the staircase, which to his dismay he found crowded by the mob, who were making their way up. Knowing that his only chance lay in breaking through them as quickly as possible, he struck out right and left, and having the advantage of being always uppermost of those who attempted to stay his progress, he succeeded in reaching the bottom with some few bruises. Here, however, the affair presented a still more formidable aspect; for no sooner had he reached the foot of the staircase, than he was seized by the collar and other parts of his coat by half-a-dozen of the mob, and saw at a little distance the glittering of several of their weapons. He gave himself up for lost, and in the energy of despair threw open his coat, and taking advantage of a slight confusion at the moment (caused by a struggle to get possession of the gold watch which he had held in his hand, and had at the same instant relinquished to them), he slipped from the coat, which was held on all sides, and pushing away those in front of him, he succeeded in reaching the street; here his nether garments fell, in some unaccountable manner, about his feet, and he stumbled and fell into a miry puddle which was immediately before him: he instantly sprang to his feet, and rushed to the entrance of a dark stable close adjacent. The mob concluded they had now secured their prey, but they were mistaken; for Schöffi had, fortunately, whilst passing this stable on a previous occasion in my company, entered it, and noticed its back entrance, which led into the bazar; through this back door he then gained the bazar, and from thence (the mob all the way at his heels), reached the house of his protector, Baij Goormuck Sing. The door was immediately shut, and Schöffi was saved.

Alone, his friend oblivious to his predicament and with the entire Court already



A group of Akalis. Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, December, 1838. Author's collection

on its journey to Lahore, Schoefft's plight can be imagined. Bhai Gurmukh was consideration itself:

He there met with a kind reception, and on cleansing himself from the mire and blood with which he was covered, it was found that he had not only received several contusions on the head from the iron knobs on the shields of the Nahungs, with which they had struck at him; but also a sword wound on the back, by which his braces had been cut through, which at once explained to him the cause of his fall into the mire at so critical a moment. The mob not evincing any inclination to disperse, the police interfered, and compelled them to retire.

During all this time I was at home, expecting his arrival every moment; and at length, when it was quite dark, some of the persons whom I had sent with the horse, came back to me with the news of the riot, and informed me that he was in the hands of the mob. This filled me with consternation, and I immediately sent to the commander of the fortress (a friend of mine), soliciting him to assist and endeavour to save the unfortunate painter. With great promptitude, he despatched a whole company of regular troops to the city, and on their way they met Schöff on his road home; he having been disguised in an oriental costume, and sent on horseback accompanied by an escort of police. My first care was to dress his wounds; and early on the following morning we left Umritsir for Lahore. I may add that the watch, and the plate, &c., which I had sent with his luncheon, were of course lost; but the painting was subsequently recovered.²⁸

Shocked and battered, and with his pride fractured but his painting intact, Schoefft repaired immediately with Honigberger to the secular safety of Lahore.²⁹

If the behaviour of the Akalis was beyond the comprehension of their victim, equally it was beyond the control of Ranjit Singh. Even as late as December 1838, when Miss Eden, Lord Auckland's sister, wished to see the Golden Temple and its environs, Ranjit Singh had to issue instructions to her escorts Ajit Singh and Lehna Singh Majithia to see 'that none of the citizens, *Akalies* or *Nihangs* should utter any undesirable word'.³⁰

²⁸ Honigberger (1852), I, 172-175.

²⁹ Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 89, was misinformed that the attack by the Akalis took place at Lahore.

³⁰ Suri (1961), 593.

Within a month, in a letter from Lahore on 3 January 1839, during Lord Auckland's visit, Osborne was writing of Ranjit Singh: 'He has been very ill, but is better. It was thought at one time that he would have died; and though better, he cannot last much longer . . . I fear I shall soon have to tell you of the old man's death'.³¹

Six months later, on 27 June 1839, Ranjit Singh lay dying. Ranjit's mind must have recalled, in those final darkening moments, the applicability to his own life of the verses of Guru Arjan³² which he surely must have heard sung to him at some time, perhaps at Amritsar:

When a man has become the slave
Of lust, anger, worldly attachment,
When sordid greed has turned him into a miser,
When he has committed the four major sins
And become a bloody despot . . .

Paralysed and speechless, he signalled to Bhai Govind Ram to distribute his accumulated wealth in a desperate bid for atonement. He particularly wanted to give away his most prized possession, the Koh-i-noor diamond to the holy temple of Jagannath. His courtiers thought otherwise. The dying Lion of the Punjab was hardly in a position to fight back. Their evasive behaviour, however, 'produced wrinkles on his forehead'.³³ It had been his last mortal wish. He had now done with the world. Guru Arjan's closing words from the same verses spoke of salvation:

And though, moreover, he has never given a thought
To holy psalms of scriptures,
Let him only set his mind on the Lord
For one moment with real attention
And his soul shall be set free.³⁴

³¹ Osborne (1840), 216, 219.

³² Guru Arjan, the fifth Sikh Guru (1563–1606), was responsible for compiling the *Granth* and for building the Golden Temple at Amritsar. The *samadh* built in his memory by Ranjit Singh stands next to that of Ranjit Singh's, opposite the Lahore Fort.

³³ Suri (1961), 694.

³⁴ Singh (1960), 177.

Three times the name of God was recited in his ear; Ranjit Singh repeated it twice with his lips. The third time he did so silently for one moment with real attention, and his noble soul was set free, as he would have wished it, 'by way of his eyes'.

CHAPTER TWO

A Lion's Lion

To Sher Singh, power came and went through the barrel of a gun. He used it to seize the throne in January 1841, when he stormed the Lahore Fort in order to dislodge the tenacious widow of Kharak Singh, Chand Kaur. It was used against him in the garden of Shah Bilawal outside Lahore when Ajit Singh of the Sindhanwalia clan emptied the contents of a double-barrelled gun into his chest.

The legitimacy of Sher Singh's claim to the throne was a tenuous one, for his own legitimacy had never been fully acknowledged by Ranjit Singh. The circumstances of his birth explain why. During Ranjit Singh's absence on the Cis-Sutlej campaign in 1807, his mother-in-law, Sada Kaur, made it known that her daughter, Mehtab Kaur (Ranjit Singh's first wife), was pregnant. No sooner had the Maharaja¹ returned than he was presented with 'twin' boys—Sher Singh (reputedly the son of a chintz weaver, Nehala) and Tara Singh (son of a Muslim girl employed by Sada Kaur). Neither could Ranjit Singh bring himself to believe Sada Kaur's explanation for their appearance, nor for that matter could subsequent historians.²

With commendable perseverance, Sada Kaur advanced the two boys in every manner that she thought would make them more acceptable to Ranjit Singh. It was brought to his notice pointedly, for instance, that 'Rani Sada Kaur, the mother-in-law of the Noble Sarkar, had sent Sher Singh and Tara Singh, the sons of the noble Sarkar, who were her grandsons, at the head of one hundred

¹ One contemporary source notes their birth as taking place in 1805. In January 1811, the boys were recorded as being 'both six years of age'. Garrett and Chopra (1935), 18. Another, writing twenty years later in 1831, notes that Sher Singh was 'less than twenty'. Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 55.

² The single exception is the Sikh historian Khushwant Singh who explains that 'what gave rise to the suggestion of illegitimacy was Ranjit's strained relations with Mehtab Kaur and her mother, Sada Kaur'. Singh (1962), 67.

and fifty horsemen from the town of Mukerian towards the Noble Sarkar; that they reached Amritsar where, in her own presence, the Rani had made them take sacred baths at the temple'. The Maharaja however remained unmoved. The chronicler continued blandly with his narrative: 'The Noble Sarkar went into a separate apartment and had his boil treated with Ghulam Mohy-ud-Din Khan, the surgeon.'³

However, Sada Kaur was not to be thwarted so easily. As the widow of Jai Singh Kanheya, she had used her position as head of the powerful Kanheya *misl* and wealth to make Ranjit Singh; she would use again the same potent resources to make Sher Singh, the more promising of her two protégés. Refusing to be overshadowed by Ranjit Singh's extravagant arrangements for the marriage of his acknowledged son Kharak Singh in 1812, she demanded from her son-in-law similar treatment for Sher Singh, whose marriage she sought to arrange. In December 1812, though Sher Singh was still under ten years old, she confronted Ranjit Singh at Amritsar and 'presented a paper containing a list of various things which she had purchased for the marriage of Sher Singh her grandson, and added that there were some other things which were yet required. After the inspection of the list by the Noble Sarkar, she said that rupees fifty thousand which he had granted her had already been exhausted and that more money was wanted for the preparation of other things'. Ranjit Singh knew when to make a tactical retreat. 'The Noble Sarkar said that she would be given the amount for them'.⁴

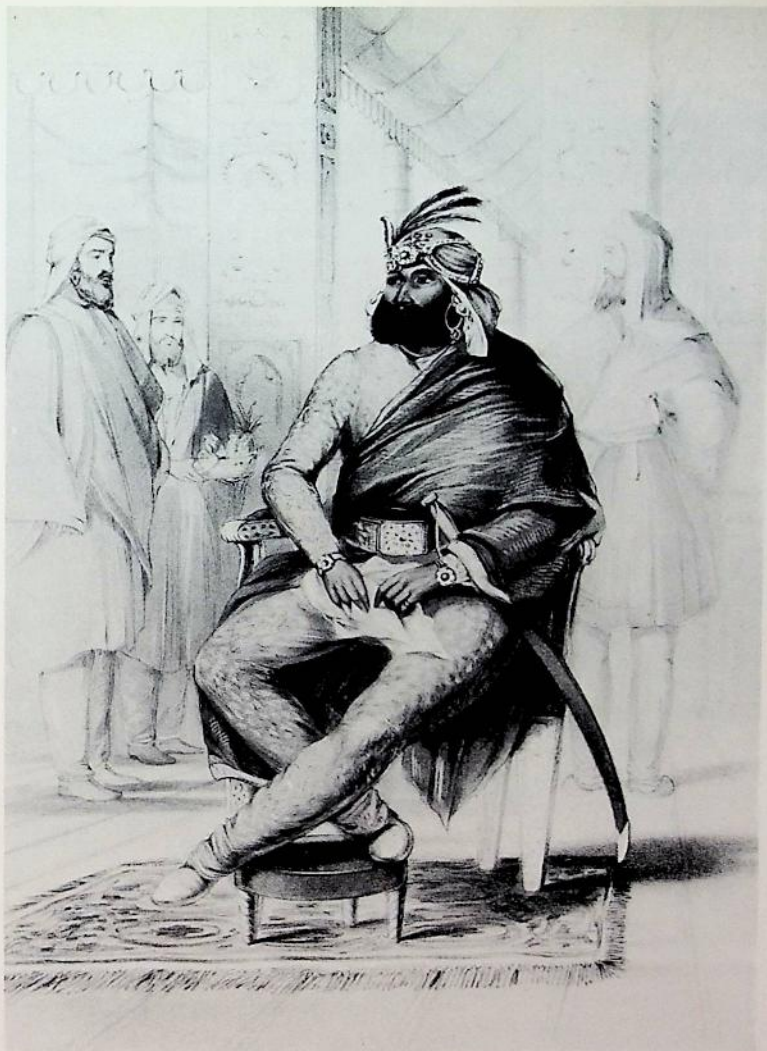
As might have been expected by everyone but herself, Sada Kaur's relations with Ranjit Singh crumbled over the years until finally, in October 1820, Ranjit Singh could take no more. He invited his mother-in-law to Lahore and, having obtained the assignment from her of her rich estates in favour of Sher Singh and Tara Singh,⁵ he ordered her imprisonment. She attempted to escape but was quickly retrieved by Kharak Singh and confined at Lahore until her death in 1827.

Sher Singh meanwhile gained prominence at Court. Gradually Ranjit Singh

³ Garrett and Chopra (1935), 27-28.

⁴ Garrett and Chopra (1935), 45.

⁵ Tara Singh grew up an imbecile and lived most of his life with Sher Singh. After the latter's accession in 1841, Tara Singh moved to his *jagir* at Dasuha, in Hoshiarpur district. His two wives, Chand Kaur and Dharam Kaur remained with Sher Singh. Tara Singh died in September, 1859.



Maharaja Sher Singh (1807-1843). Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, Lahore, December, 1838. Author's collection



Prince Pratap Singh (1831–1843). Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, Lahore, December, 1838. Author's collection

began to entrust him with increasing responsibilities—some military, others administrative. Despatched to the 1820 campaign in Hazara while still in his teens, Sher Singh acquitted himself with sufficient ability to be nominated by Ranjit Singh to take charge of Lahore during the Maharaja's absence in 1826. Four years later, the mature Sher Singh was made Governor of Kangra and in 1831 he was actively responsible for the quelling of the Syed Ahmad revolt in the Pathan north. Ranjit Singh responded to the warmth of Sher Singh's personality. He saw in him all those qualities of vigorous masculine chivalry and personal magnetism that had been his own natural inheritance. Comparing him with his own weak heir-apparent, Kharak Singh, Ranjit Singh sensed the embarrassing difference; Sher Singh looked every inch his true heir, although he was cautious not to admit so in public.⁶ But between Sher Singh and the throne stood Raja Nau Nehal Singh, Kharak Singh's bright and ambitious only son. He had high credentials, legitimacy and capability, on his side. Sher Singh, though, could afford to wait.

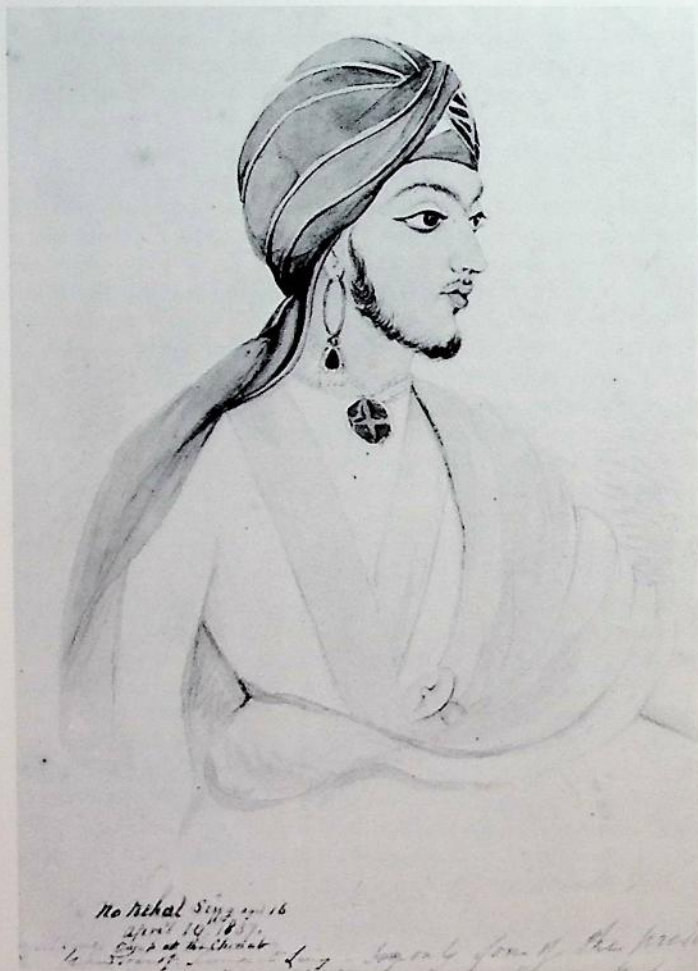
Recognition by the new forces that would ultimately alter the political scene and a tacit understanding not to interfere were essential to any successor to Ranjit Singh. Kharak Singh thought fit to solicit British co-operation by drawing their attention to Sher Singh's foggy origins. Sher Singh, however, applied himself to achieving his aims in his own way—he used a force of his own, the force of his friendly, endearing personality. The course he chose was not altogether one without hazards. Sher Singh's pro-European leanings had always been regarded with suspicion by Ranjit Singh. As early as 1831, Ranjit Singh took the precaution of allowing Sher Singh to meet Captain Wade, who provided an escort to the visiting Alexander Burnes, soldier, traveller, writer and diplomat, only in his own presence.⁷

Later, Sher Singh's excessively cordial reception of the delegation, headed by Sir Henry Fane, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, to the marriage of Raja Nau Nehal Singh in 1837 did not escape Ranjit Singh's critical notice. Nor indeed Osborne's, who understood why Ranjit Singh held Sher Singh's favourite son, Pratap Singh, as a hostage at the Court until his father's return from his duties as an escort to the English visitors.⁸

⁶ An entry in the Court Chronicle reveals that as late as 1838 'The Maharaja observed that the rank and position of *Khalsa* Kharak Singh was superior to that of *Khalsa* Sher Singh, who had his own place'. Suri (1961), 448.

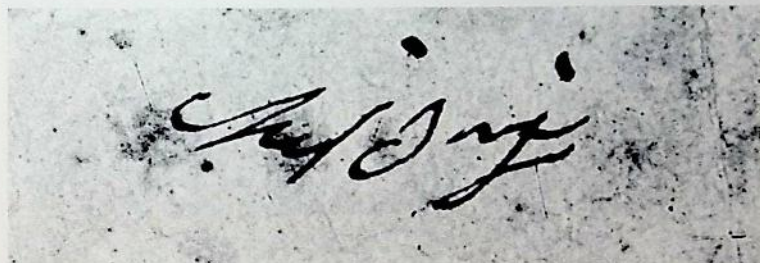
⁷ Suri (1961), 50.

⁸ Osborne (1840), 58–59.



Maharaja Nau Nehal Singh (1821-1840). Drawing by G. T. Vigne, Punjab, 1837.
India Office Library and Records, London

Emily Eden, a year later, met Sher Singh and liked him, but felt sure that she would find him more 'pleasant if one spoke his language'.⁹ Sher Singh for his part, having collected whatever could be transported from the West—'a very good English britchka'¹⁰, 'looking-glasses, French scent-bottles, and little knick-knacks of all kinds',¹¹ 'a large number of English musical boxes, clocks, watches and other similar machines'¹²—had also begun to learn her language and was able to sign his own name in a cautious hand.



The signature in English of Maharaja Sher Singh (1807–1843). Punjab Records Office, Lahore

At the time of Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, Sher Singh was away from Lahore and, after a tense council between the Sikh *bhais* and Kharak Singh, he was summoned by them 'to come very soon with his heart quite at rest'.¹³ Sher Singh had every reason to feel disquieted. The changes that could be expected in the wake of the 'Punjabi Lion's' death could only be for the worse. Subsequent events realised the commonly expressed apprehension.

The murder of Chet Singh, Kharak Singh's favourite, by the Dogra Rajas in October 1839; the deposition of the imbecile Maharaja by his restless son, Nau Nehal Singh; the latter's death on 5 November 1840, while returning from his father's cremation; all were inexorable steps that brought Sher Singh closer to the throne and ultimately to the garden of Shah Bilawal.

⁹ Eden (1866), I, 300.

¹⁰ Osborne (1840), 205.

¹¹ Fane (1842), 126.

¹² Honigberger (1852), 169.

¹³ Suri (1961), 695.

No one was ever sure whether the injuries suffered by Maharaja Nau Nehal Singh from the falling masonry that crashed down upon him were an accident, or whether the fatal damage to his head had been caused by the dangerous attentions of Raja Dhian Singh. All were unanimous, however, that Dhian Singh had withheld the news of the young Maharaja's premature death until Sher Singh could reach Lahore from his estate at Batala.

Rani Chand Kaur, who had been a party to her husband's deposition and his death by poisoning, and who now suddenly found herself an accomplice to Dhian Singh's plans for her regency, was not in a mood to yield her claims easily. She maintained that a daughter-in-law, one of Nau Nehal's young wives, was expecting a child and declared herself, with the support of the chameleon Raja Gulab Singh and the Sindhanwalia family, the defender of the unborn child's right to the throne. Before she had an opportunity of exercising any substantial control in the affairs of state, she found herself besieged in the Lahore Fort in which she, Raja Gulab Singh and his nephew Raja Hira Singh had ensconced themselves. With the support of the Sikh Khalsa army, Sher Singh waited outside, encamped in the Hazuri Bagh.

On the fifth day of skirmishing, Raja Dhian Singh returned to Lahore from his private estates in Jammu, to which he had retired in a not unnoticed gesture of detachment, and within two days of bargaining with his brother resolved the conflict by negotiation. The spoils of the kingdom were shared. Sher Singh got the throne of Lahore and the Koh-i-noor (which Gardner feared Chand Kaur might have swallowed had she been able to lay her hands on it);¹⁴ the dispossessed Rani a *jagir* of nine lakhs, her self-respect, and shortly afterwards a fatal flagstone on her head; Raja Dhian Singh, the Wazirship and its authority for the rest of his life; and Raja Gulab Singh a selection from the royal *toshakhana* (treasury) of a value of twenty million rupees, out of which he was to purchase the state of Kashmir from the British for himself.¹⁵ Sher Singh was proclaimed the new Maharaja on 18 January 1841.

¹⁴ Gardner (1898), 237.

¹⁵ Latif counts Gulab Singh's gains in detail: 'Sixteen carts were filled with rupees and other silver coins, while 500 horsemen were each entrusted with a bag of gold mohurs, and his orderlies were also entrusted with jewellery and other valuable articles. The costly *pashminas*, and rich wardrobes, and the best horses in Ranjit Singh's stables, were all purloined by Gulab Singh on the occasion of his evacuating Lahore, an event which took place on the night following the cessation of hostilities'. Latif (1891), 507.



The Hazuri Bagh pavilion, Lahore Fort. Lithograph after an original drawing by C. S. Harding, Lahore, 1846. Author's collection

The Khalsa, having placed Sher Singh on the throne through its timely loyalty and assistance, proceeded to exact from him the same toll that Sada Kaur might have done, had she lived. The voracious soldiers demanded increases in their pay and a dismissal of unpopular officers. A mutiny ensued, and several of the European officers found themselves in extreme personal danger. On their advice, supported by that of Wazir Dhian Singh, Sher Singh took the audacious step of settling the arrears in the pay of the troops, which Ranjit Singh had never been impolitic enough to do. Thus satisfied for a while, most of the troops were given leave and the rest were deployed to restore law and order.

For Sher Singh there was no more fighting to be done. He left the control of the Government in the capable hands of Raja Dhian Singh. Had Sher Singh been more perceptive he might have taken more notice of the revealing sign of indestructible will-power, the twin-thumbs of Dhian Singh's right hand.¹⁶ But such thoughts were far away from Sher Singh's mind as he disported himself in the Hazuri Bagh pavilion, stretched comfortably 'on his bed of roses, with wreaths of flowers hanging over the beautiful marble arches, and rose and musk

¹⁶ Gardner (1898), 219.

water sprinkled on the ground, while bands of musicians discoursed sweet music.¹⁷

It was during this period of idyllic self-indulgence in Sher Singh's life that the painter Schoefft came to Lahore. Osborne had once recounted how Sher Singh, then still a prince, had appeared before Ranjit Singh simply dressed and without jewels. When questioned on his stark appearance, Sher Singh touched his sword and replied 'I am a soldier, and this is the only jewel I value.'¹⁸ There was no danger, however, of Sher Singh appearing simply dressed after 1841. Schoefft portrayed him as Prince Soltykoff saw him a year later: 'a big, stoutish man of forty, covered with the most beautiful jewels in the world.'¹⁹ (See Colour Plate II.) These jewels included on his right arm the famous Koh-i-noor set in an amulet and flanked by the Shah Shuja diamonds (see Appendix 2), countless coveted emeralds,²⁰ more emeralds in a bunch the size of grapes²¹ in his turban, and strings of graded pearls²² across his chest.

¹⁷ Latif (1891), 507–508.

¹⁸ Osborne (1840), 66.

¹⁹ Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 97. Soltykoff recorded seeing 'a portrait of the King covered with jewels and holding in his hand a scimitar straight and very broad at the point' (103).

²⁰ Fane (1842), 122, commenting on Sher Singh's appearance when still a prince, noticed the emeralds particularly: 'he had the most beautiful tiara of diamonds, emeralds and rubies, I have almost ever seen; some of the emeralds in particular being enormous'. These emeralds, and others shown occasionally on Ranjit Singh's horses, were set as a girdle comprising 19 large emeralds, 56 smaller ones and 159 pearls. The girdle was presented to Queen Victoria by the East India Company in 1851. It is at present in the Indian Room at Buckingham Palace, London, and has been reproduced in Twining (1960), pl. 73 b.

²¹ 'A bunch of grapes made up of twenty-seven emeralds, the smallest emerald the size of a marble, and all of such a beautiful colour; there are large pearls between each, and it is mounted on a plain green enamel stalk. It looks like the fruit in Aladdin's garden. We wanted G. to buy it for his parting present to Runjeet Singh.' Eden (1866), I, 254. It was duly purchased from the Lucknow merchant and presented by Lord Auckland to the Maharaja on 28 December 1838, 'as a proof of the Governor-General's generosity.'

²² Osborne (1840), 202–203, remarked that Ranjit Singh's 'string of pearls was . . . even handsomer than the diamond; they are about three hundred in number, and literally the size of small marbles, all picked pearls and round, and perfect both in shape and colour'. These were also presented to Queen Victoria by the East India Company in 1851. At present, they are strung in four rows, two of 55 pearls and two of 56 pearls, all capable of being clasped together in one long row. For further details, see Twining (1960), 191.



The golden throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839). Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Seated on the golden throne²³ of Ranjit Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh looked as if there was nothing he could not afford, including forgiveness.

Exercising a kingly but ill-advised magnanimity, Sher Singh pardoned the Sindhanwalia sardars who in 1841 had sided with Chand Kaur against him in the war for succession. He released Lehna Singh, the head of the clan, and permitted the return of Attar Singh and Ajit Singh to Lahore. The former intimate confidence enjoyed by Raja Dhian Singh, suggested in the sketch in which the Wazir, sitting closest to the king, earnestly advises him whilst the other

²³ A sketch of Ranjit Singh seated in this throne, as recollected by Osborne, was reproduced in Osborne (1840), 74. The throne was discovered by Dr Login in 1849 in the Fort *toshakhana* and listed in the amusing *Memorandum of Memorabilia*, published in Login (1890), 183, in which it is called 'Runjeet's golden chair of State'. The throne was taken to England soon afterwards. It is now on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

courtiers sit silent, preoccupied and at a distance from the royal cushion, had begun to wilt. (Colour Plate IV.)

It did not take the Sindhanwalias long to poison Sher Singh's mind against Dhian Singh. The latter retaliated by openly sponsoring Dalip Singh, the son of Rani Jindan. Soon each party was searching for its own final solution. Sher Singh wished to be rid of his tiresome Wazir, Dhian Singh of his superior, and the Sindhanwalias of both the upstarts.

By a clever and intricate plan, the Sindhanwalias led both Sher Singh and Dhian Singh into believing that each was determined and committed to eliminate the other. Obtaining Sher Singh's signature on a conspiratorial document, they were able to seal his fate first. On 15 September, 1843, while the unsuspecting Maharaja sat watching wrestlers at his garden-retreat at Shah Bilawal, Ajit Singh approached him and presented him with a gun for his examination. Sher Singh's attention was distracted for a moment and as he reached out to examine the weapon,²⁴ Ajit Singh fired directly into the Maharaja's chest.

*'Eh ki dagha?'*²⁵ roared Sher Singh, before falling to the swords of the hunting regicides. A few minutes later Lehna Singh was pursuing the young Pratap Singh, who was distributing alms in a nearby garden, and without mercy cut down the doting father's cub. A sensitive diarist writing in Persian immortalised this tragic battle in a single, moving line: *Ba shauq sagan shikar-i-sheran kardand*²⁶ — For their sport, curs had hunted lions.

Ajit Singh carried away Sher Singh's severed head as a trophy, and left his remains to be cremated in the courtyard, not four hundred yards away from the room in which he was slain.²⁷

²⁴ Steinbach, a Prussian mercenary, understandably identified the weapon as 'an English rifle'. Steinbach (1846), 35.

²⁵ Translated: 'What treachery is this?' Quoted in Latif (1891), 513, from Smyth (1847), 81–82.

²⁶ Qadir (1917), 87.

²⁷ Although Gardner (1898), 251, recalled that 'not a thought was bestowed on the sepulture of his remains', he ignored the facts. Steinbach (1846), 35, was closer to the truth when he wrote that 'his body was claimed and given up during the day to two of Sher Singh's wives, and the usual suttee rites performed over it.' Of the four wives Sher Singh married and the two transferred to him by Tara Singh, all but two survived him. His first wife, Desa, died in 1821, and another, Chand Kaur, must have committed suttee with his body for the *samadh* at Shah Bilawal contains two small plinths. Flanking the white *samadh* on its west and east side are the commemorative *samadhs* of Rani Dharam Kaur (died in 1850) and Rani Partab Kaur (died in 1857).

CHAPTER THREE

The Unquiet Spirit

An incomplete portrait-sketch on wood, perhaps also by Schoefft, has been associated with Rani Jindan, the mother of Dalip Singh and one of the various wives of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Colour Plate V).¹ The sketch, obviously a study for a fuller picture intended to be completed at some later stage, shows a young woman in her early twenties, reclining languidly against a bolster. The subject's face with its large, liquid eyes, aquiline nose and sensuous lips has been drawn boldly and with feeling. The expression on the lady's face, an expression of muted but scarcely veiled ambition, has been captured without disguise. The stance of the figure, the natural folds of the loose comfortable garments clearly point to the picture having been painted from a live model. A further clue is the velvet cushion upon which the figure is seated. A similar cushion is seen in the picture of Sher Singh in Council (Colour Plate IV) and another has been preserved in the Princess Bamba Collection.²

If, as tradition dictates, the sketch is of the remarkable Rani Jindan, whom Sir Henry Lawrence, the Resident at Lahore, was later to describe as 'the Messalina of the Punjab', it would be pertinent to examine first a little of the background of the Rani and of the circumstances in which such a picture could have been prepared.

She and her brothers, Jawahir and Heera Singh,³ were the children of Ranjit Singh's dog-keeper, Manna. She was born in 1817⁴ and, according to Gardner,

¹ Singh (1962), 185, note 2, names twenty-three wives in all. He quotes Dalip Singh as saying in an interview to Le Voltaire in January 1889 that he was 'the son of one of [his] father's forty-six wives'. If so, that would increase the number by nine above the thirty-seven listed in the pedigree prepared for Dalip Singh and displayed in the New Gallery, Lahore Fort. See Khan (1961), 14, No. 82.

² The cushion is exhibited in the chamber on the second floor of the New Gallery at the Lahore Fort.

³ Not to be confused with Raja Hira Singh, son of Raja Dhian Singh. Heera Singh accompanied Rani Jindan in her exile to Sheikhpura.

⁴ Griffin (1865), 7, records that she died 'in 1863, aged 46 years'.

came to the notice of Ranjit Singh at an early age. Her father used to carry her on his shoulders and run beside Ranjit Singh's *palki*, eventually prevailing upon the Maharaja to assume the burden of his pretty daughter. She was put under the care of Raja Dhian Singh and sent to Amritsar in 1830. Gardner recalled that the Raja 'took her back to Lahore, treated her with great dignity, and ultimately effected the celebration of the *karewa*, tantamount to the *chadar dalna* marriage ceremony, between her and Ranjit Singh.'⁵ Exactly when this took place has not been recorded.

In September 1838, she gave birth to a son, Dalip Singh. It was commonly rumoured that the child was not the Maharaja's, and that in fact he was the son of a handsome water-carrier, but this did not deter Ranjit Singh from extending to the infant the same generous shelter of paternity that he had bestowed on the offspring of his other equally enterprising wives. A contemporary record of the events reads 'On hearing the tidings the Sarkar expressed unlimited pleasure.'⁶ He remained, however, at Amritsar.

Rani Jindan's rooms in the Fort, where Dalip Singh was born, were some distance away from the privacy of the Summan Burj, where the more senior ladies in the royal harem were lodged. This indicates that during Ranjit Singh's lifetime she could not have enjoyed a particularly favoured status within the royal citadel. The small pavilion allotted to Rani Jindan has since been demolished. It was situated next to the greater Khwabgah or Sleeping-Hall in the Quadrangle of Jahangir.⁷

When Schoefft stayed at the Court of Lahore in 1841, Prince Dalip Singh was three years old. The child was painted by Schoefft and it is likely that the artist must also have seen the Rani. From the composition of the large Darbar picture it is clear that Schoefft had been allowed access to the area immediately outside the Summan Burj. He would, therefore, almost certainly have had permission to move around the other sections of the Fort, including the area of the large Quadrangle. It is not unreasonable on the basis of this evidence to suppose that Schoefft must

⁵ Gardner (1898), 253. Gardner explains in a note that the 'offspring of this form of union was considered legitimate, and had the right of inheritance. *Chadar dalna* means "throwing the sheet".'

Griffin (1892), 109-110, doubts whether such a formality took place, and whether Dalip Singh was even Rani Jindan's son.

⁶ Suri (1961), 525.

⁷ Vogel (1911), 49.

have taken the opportunity to sketch the reclining Rani, as she waited her turn in the macabre contests that followed the assassination of Maharaja Sher Singh.

Within ten months of Dalip Singh's birth, the old Maharaja died at Lahore. Rani Jindan did not join the other four ranis who committed suttee on his funeral pyre, the most likely reason being that she had to rear an infant son and potential heir to the throne.⁸ She remained a shadowy figure, a seeming pawn in the more practised hands of Raja Dhian Singh and Maharaja Sher Singh, and gradually assumed increasing significance as each death or murder brought her son closer to the throne of Lahore.

By 1843, Maharaja Sher Singh and his Wazir, Raja Dhian Singh, had reached the peak of mutual distrust. For the wily Dogra Raja it was necessary to foster the claims of a rival, and this he proposed to do by exhibiting an interest in the young Dalip Singh. Before the year was out, Maharaja Sher Singh and his young son, Pratap Singh, were murdered in a grisly massacre by the Sindhanwalia faction headed by Ajit Singh. On the same day, 'the crimson 15 September 1843', Ajit Singh killed Raja Dhian Singh outside the Fort at Lahore and then, having shut himself up in the citadel, proclaimed Dalip Singh as the Maharaja and himself as the minor ruler's Wazir. His tenure was brief. In fact, it lasted no longer than the stoic patience of the widow of Raja Dhian Singh, who waited on the funeral pyre until the severed heads of her husband's assassins were placed at her feet.⁹

A vivid picture of the terror experienced by the populace in Lahore during these days is provided by a diarist of the time, who wrote:

'People have buried their belongings out of fear and are very shaky. When the news of the murder of Dhyani Singh spread, there was great consternation in Lahore. Hindus and Muhammadans were all bewailing his death. The thieves and rogues began to threaten the people and to fire guns. . . . The whole of our household is very uneasy. Had it not been for Raja Hira Singh, the country would have been looted. There was gun-firing at night. Beli Ram and Gurmukh were both trying to keep order at night. I was up the whole night with

⁸ Dr. John Login (later tutor to Dalip Singh) was led to believe by one of Rani Jindan's indiscreet relatives that 'her affection for the handsome young Raja Heera Singh was the cause of her not offering to perform suttee with old Runjeet' (Login (1890), 161).

⁹ Latif (1891), 517, states that this act of filial piety was performed by Raja Hira Singh; Gardner (1898), 249, characteristically reserves the credit for himself.



Raja Hira Singh (c. 1816–1844). Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, Lahore, December, 1838. Author's collection

OPPOSITE

Sikh Chieftains. Lithograph after an original drawing by Prince A. Soltykoff, Lahore, 1842. Author's collection

the men of my neighbourhood and we were keeping a watch. Some *burchhas* (*badmashes*) looted Dabbi Bazar and the bazars of the Ilaqa bands and shoe merchants.¹⁰

Raja Hira Singh entered the Fort as the new Wazir, kissed the feet of the young new Maharaja and, sitting in the marble *baradari* of the Hazuri Bagh, took relentless revenge on the Sindhanwalia clan. Rani Jindan saw in the blood-bath an opportunity to forward her own interests. Playing upon the natural resentment felt by Raja Suchet Singh — Osborne's 'very beau idéal of a Sikh chief'¹¹ — at his nephew's success, she involved him in her plans to oust Raja Hira Singh. A mistimed appeal though to the Khalsa by Jawahir Singh (Rani Jindan's brother) jeopardised their chances. Jawahir Singh was imprisoned, and Raja Suchet Singh retired to Jammu. He was to return again at the invitation of the Khalsa and to meet his death at its hands when the unstable mob changed its mind.

Rani Jindan's next support was Lal Singh, an ambitious Brahmin and originally a protégé of Raja Dhian Singh. Using the Khalsa's mounting dislike

¹⁰ Qadir (1917), 86.

¹¹ Osborne (1840), 64.



of Raja Hira Singh's confidant, Pandit Jalla, they brought about the Raja's death and at last, on 21 December 1844, Rani Jindan gained control. Through the cradle, she began to manipulate the throne.

In April 1845, she received Raja Gulab Singh at the Summan Burj. She offered him the title of Wazir, but he was too canny to risk his fortunes by allying himself with the Sikhs. The following month Jawahir Singh had to be appointed Wazir. Unable to control the Khalsa, after his treacherous murder of Peshora Singh, reputed son of Ranjit Singh, named after the Peshawar campaign being conducted by the Maharaja at the time, Jawahir Singh was cut down by the Sikh troops in front of his protesting sister. 'The Rani was quite inconsolable for many weeks after the catastrophe. She renewed her lamentations every day, and with her long dishevelled hair, accompanied by her slave-girls, walked through the streets of Lahore, exposed to the public gaze, to pay her visit to the tomb of her brother, in a garden outside the Masti Gate, across the parade ground, where she gave free vent to her tears.'¹²

Rani Jindan was declared Regent for her son and began to conduct official business of State, assisted by her lover Lal Singh and the ubiquitous Dina Nath. Her policy, if it could be described as such, was one of appeasement and opportunism. Sensing that the fickle Khalsa was likely to turn on her with the same savagery as it had on her predecessors, she needed a diversion. That diversion was the British Army. The Sikh Army crossed the Sutlej river on 11 December 1845. War was declared two days later.

Rani Jindan's boudoir politics were scant material for the fighting Khalsa, which needed arms and provisions. The state of tension and desperation in those cold days of January 1845, may be gauged from a somewhat tinted but undoubtedly accurate recollection by Gardner:

The unfortunate Sikhs were hurried on to their fate, and were literally starved for rations. They sent a deputation of 500 picked Sikhs to Lahore to urge the dire necessities of the army—for three days they had lived upon grain and raw carrots. The Rani at first would not allow the deputation to enter Lahore. She feared justly for her personal safety at the hands of these desperate men. I, therefore, placed four battalions of infantry in guard over the queen, and she at last consented to hold a durbar and receive the deputation. They were told to come armed with swords only. Under the pretence of this being a State occasion, I turned out a very large personal guard for the queen, who waited

¹² Latif (1891), 537.



Raja Lal Singh, wearing a suit of armour. Lithograph after an original drawing by C. S. Hardinge, Lahore, February, 1846. Author's collection

behind a screen the arrival of the envoys. I was standing close to the Rani, and could see the gesticulations and movements of the deputation. In answer to the urgent and loud complaints of the sacrifice to which the army was exposed, she said that Gulab Singh had forwarded vast supplies. "No, he has not," roared the deputation; "we know the old fox: he has not sent breakfast for a bird (*chiria-ki-haziri*)."

Further parley ensued, the tempers of both parties waxing wroth. At last the deputation said "Give us powder and shot". At this I saw some movement behind the *purdah* (the little Dhulip was seated in front of it). I could detect that the Rani was shifting her petticoat; I could see that she stepped out of it, and then rolling it up rapidly into a ball, flung it over the screen at the heads of the angry envoys, crying out, "Wear that, you cowards! I'll go in trousers and fight myself!" The effect was electric. After a moment's pause, during which the deputation seemed stunned, a unanimous shout arose, "Dhulip Singh Maharaja, we will go and die for his kingdom and the Khalsaji!" and breaking up tumultuously and highly excited, this dangerous deputation dispersed, and rejoined the army. The courage and

intuition displayed by this extraordinary woman under such critical circumstances filled us all with as much amazement as admiration.¹³

The Rani's quick thinking and brazenness saved the hour but it could not save the day; the Sikhs returned to be routed at the battle of Sobraon on 10 February. Almost two full months from the date that the Sikh Khalsa had crossed the Sutlej river, the British Army returned the compliment.

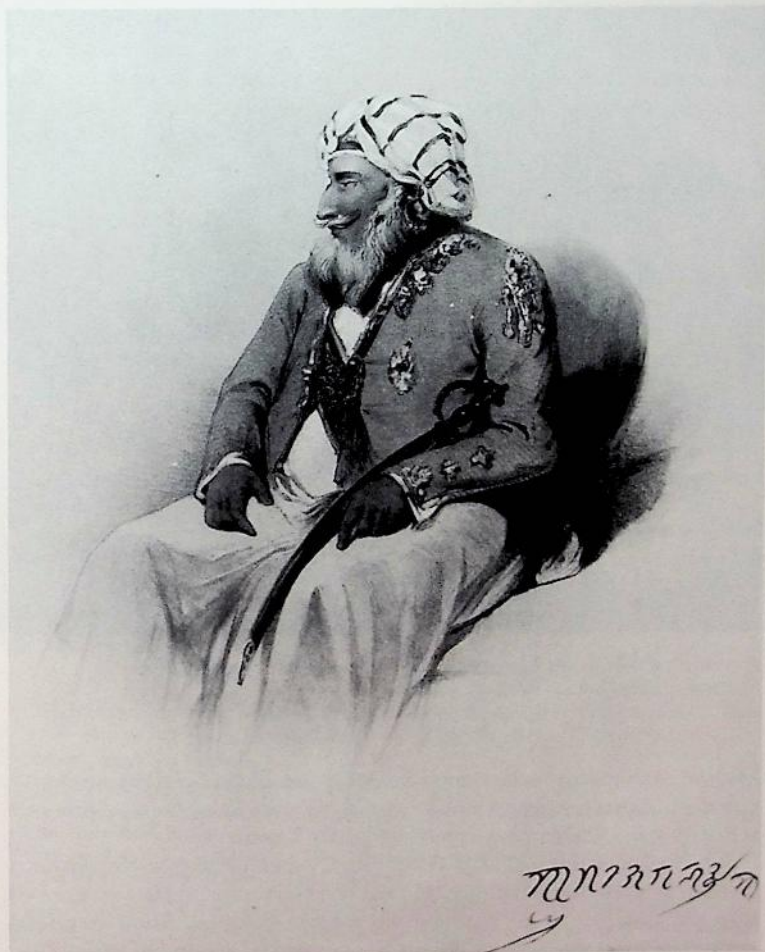
In her moment of desperation, Rani Jindan turned again to Raja Gulab Singh, imploring him to come to Lahore and to negotiate a settlement with the British. He came, but while she and the crestfallen Sikhs looked on disconsolately he proceeded to negotiate separate terms of peace and prosperity for himself. While under the Treaty of Lahore the Sikh Darbar got a British Resident in the person of Henry Lawrence, a force of British troops to be maintained in Lahore at the Darbar's cost and a fine of one and a half crores of rupees, Raja Gulab Singh, taking advantage of the bankruptcy of the Sikhs, under a separate treaty made a week later, discharged the fine by ceding territories he did not need between the Beas and the Indus rivers, and by paying fifty lacs of rupees he purchased the state of Kashmir.

Although Rani Jindan continued to act as Regent after the Treaty, assisted as before by her paramour Lal Singh, the temptation to continue scheming, even though it was likely to be fatal to her interests, proved unbearable. Goaded by Sheikh Imamuddin, the Governor of Kashmir, into refusing to surrender Kashmir to the impatient Raja Gulab Singh, she and Lal Singh provoked the British into action. For this interference, Lal Singh was tried and banished to Benares. Rani Jindan, alone but not lonely, was left wondering 'why a matrimonial alliance was not at once formed for her with some officer of rank, who would then manage State affairs with her.'¹⁴ To this urgent need she applied her energies and 'used to send for portraits of all the officers, and in one especially she took great interest, and said that he must be a lord. The fortunate individual's name has not transpired, and much to the Rani's mortification, the affair went no further.'¹⁵ Her presence in the Royal Palace at Lahore was considered by Lawrence as undesirable. She had begun to regard herself, and led others to believe, that she could act as the pivot of anti-British opinion. The Resident was irritated by her, the Sikh Sardars, whom she despised since the killing of her

¹³ Gardner (1898), 271-273.

¹⁴ Gardner (1898), 273-274.

¹⁵ Gardner (1898), 273.



Maharaja Gulab Singh (1792–1857). Lithograph after an original drawing by C. S. Hardinge, Lahore, February, 1846. Author's collection



A cavalcade of Sikh troops. Lithograph after an original drawing by Prince A. Soltykoff, Lahore, 1842. Author's collection

brother Jawahir Singh, unanimously found her superfluous, and her son did not care at all. Orders were issued by Lawrence for her removal to the smaller fortress at Sheikhpura, some twenty-two miles outside Lahore.

It was planned that Maharaja Dalip Singh would be taken to the Shalimar Gardens for a few days and during his absence his mother would be secretly taken from the Fort, lest he be upset by her sudden departure. Such thoughtful precautions were unnecessary. When he was told of the real reason for her removal 'viz., that the Maharanee's reputation was so notorious, her vices so incorrigible, and her example so pernicious, that the Governor-General thought

it would be wrong to leave him with her . . . the Maharaja took this disclosure with much indifference'.¹⁶

Rani Jindan's own reaction was equally pragmatic. She sent a message to the Sardars that instead of being sent to Sheikhpura she might be allowed to proceed on pilgrimage. Lawrence, already well-familiar with her wiles, knew what she had in mind. 'By this, I understood Benares, and doubt not Her Highness had some faint vision of seeing Raja Lal Singh again.'¹⁷

A General Proclamation was issued on 20 August 1847, explaining the reasons that had made the Rani's removal necessary. Her influence over both her son and the Court was considered detrimental to the maintenance of order in the Punjab Kingdom. Lawrence remarked prophetically 'The unquiet spirit which could not content itself with the voluptuous freedom of the Summan Boorj, and an income of one and a half lakhs of rupees, is not likely to slumber in the dull seclusion of Sheikhoopoor.'¹⁸ He was right.

Although she was exiled beyond convenient access Rani Jindan was only twenty-two miles away, and closer than Lawrence deemed comfortable. From Sheikhpura she was transferred to Ferozepur on 15 May 1848, accompanied there by Fakir Nuruddin, and later moved to Benares where she arrived on 2 August. Both she and her maids were searched on their arrival for any jewels that belonged to the Lahore Darbar and for any incriminating papers. A pearl necklace was identified as part of the official jewels and returned to Lahore, but no papers were discovered. Her income was reduced to Rs. 1,000 per month.¹⁹ She was moved sometime later to the Fort at Chunar.²⁰

¹⁶ Papers (1849), 52. Dalip Singh was later to confide that 'she had only disgraced him, "*Serif humka [sic] bud nam deah;*" . . . [and] she used to strike him daily.' (Login (1890), 239).

¹⁷ Papers (1849), 52.

¹⁸ Papers (1849), 51.

¹⁹ The Rani, however, felt that she needed at least Rs. 2,208 per month to live on. In a note sent to her custodian, Major Macgregor, she listed her personal expenses as Rs. 1,490 including Rs. 300 for her own clothes, Rs. 50 for *pan* and betel nuts and Rs. 80 for attar. Rs. 718 was left to be shared between 63 servants. (Papers (1849), 576-577).

²⁰ The Rani could not have agreed less with Fanny Eden's reaction to Chunar Fort: 'Chunar turned out to be unexpectedly beautiful. All of a sudden . . . a whole ridge of hills came into view, with Chunar planted on an immense rock rising from the river—a fort full of ancient buildings'. (Dunbar (1955), 105). But then Miss Eden went there under circumstances slightly different from those under which Mrs. Ranjit Singh was made to undertake the journey.

Rani Jindan's career in many ways parallels that of the ill-fated but equally reckless Mary Queen of Scots. Both possessed a sensuous temperament, both used themselves and allowed themselves to be used for political ends, neither was able to achieve a full relationship with her only son, and both of them found themselves (unfairly, as each maintained) accused of being in possession of incriminating seditious letters. They were both imprisoned and managed to effect their escape by exchanging clothes with their maids, Mary Queen of Scots in May 1568 from Lochleven Castle and Rani Jindan from the Chunar Fort on 18 April, 1849.²¹

The convulsions in the Punjab, brought about by the rebellion of Dewan Mul Raj at Multan from 20 April 1848 onwards until the defeat of the Sikhs and their surrender less than a year later on 12 March 1849, were too much for Rani Jindan to endure in silence. Within a fortnight of the fall of Multan to British forces, she was writing to the Governor-General. 'The British Government has done well, in causing my removal; it has saved my life; ungrateful wretches would have taken it. My wish is to requite the British Government, for the good it has done me: how is this to be effected?' she asked rhetorically. She had the answer ready. 'Why, in this manner: send me back to the Punjab, and I would repress anarchy, and restore good government . . . and would settle the affairs of that country in four months.'²²

The Rani's sense of timing, as before, was superb; her judgement, as always, incredibly faulty. The peremptory response of the Governor-General, writing from his camp at Ferozepur, was not entirely unexpected. 'The letter from the Maharanee calls for no answer'.²³ The British were able to manage without her help and to succeed in half the time she had proposed.

After escaping from Chunar the Rani stayed in Nepal as a pensioner of the Nepalese Government.²⁴ Her circumstances greatly reduced, she slipped gradually into a decline. Acknowledging a letter sent by Maharaja Dalip Singh for transmission to his mother through the Resident at Kathmandu, the Private Secretary to the Governor-General (Lord Canning) wrote to Dr John Login

²¹ 'There is a rumour current that his mother has escaped from the Fort at Chunar. I trust she won't come this way.' Login wrote to his wife on April 29th, 1849. (Login (1890), 158).

²² Papers (1849), 581.

²³ Papers (1849), 582.

²⁴ Gower (1905), 169-170.

and told him 'Colonel Ramsay (The Resident) speaks of her as much changed. She is blind, and had lost much of the energy which formerly characterized her, taking apparently but little interest in what was going on'.²⁵

This was in January 1860. Rani Jindan was forty-three years old. She wanted to settle in British territory. It was considered safe as 'there was no longer a man found in the Punjab who would shoulder a musket at her bidding'.²⁶ When her son Maharaja Dalip Singh returned to India the following year he arranged to meet her, and in February 1861 he was writing to Dr Login '... my mother has declared she will not separate from me any more'.²⁷ She returned with him to London and was lodged first in a house rented for them by Login in Lancaster Gate. Login's wife described her with compassion: 'Jinda Kour was truly an object of commiseration when one contrasted her present with her former state. To see her now, with health broken, eye-sight dimmed, and her once-famed beauty vanished—it was hard to understand the power she had wielded through her charms. It was only when she grew interested and excited in conversation, that one caught glimpses, beneath that air of indifference and the torpor of advancing age, of that shrewd and plotting brain'.²⁸

Attended by the servants who had accompanied her to England, including Soortoo,²⁹ a maid who was of the same age as Dalip Singh and who had been constantly with the Rani, she maintained some glimmer of her unquenchable identity, as a description of her returning a call of Mrs Login shows, '... she was assisted up the stairs to the dressing-room floor by several servants (a piece of Oriental *etiquette* which her infirmities rendered perhaps not unnecessary). The exertion, indeed, to her, must have been most fatiguing, and a great mark of condescension on her part, for she appeared dressed in full English costume—bonnet with feather, mantle, dress, and large crinoline complete!—which she had put on *over* her native dress! It was no wonder, therefore, that with the added weight she found it difficult to walk. The crinoline with which she was encumbered would not permit the poor Ranee to seat herself, until two of her

²⁵ Login (1890), 450.

²⁶ Edwardes (1851), II, 398.

²⁷ Login (1890), 456.

²⁸ Login (1890), 458.

²⁹ Soortoo was converted to Christianity after Rani Jindan's death and under the watchful guidance of a Dr and Mrs Wilson at the Bombay Mission led a most exemplary life as a Christian. Login (1890), 490.

servants lifted her bodily on to a chair, on which she was then able to sit comfortably, Indian fashion, with her feet under her, while her crinoline spread all around! She had only just received her jewels from the custom-house, and was naturally delighted to have them again in her possession; for since her flight from Chunar Fort to Nepal the Indian Government had retained them, and only delivered them to her at Calcutta when she embarked for England. On this occasion she was decorated with a large assortment, the most remarkable being some beautiful pearls and emeralds, which, as a graceful concession to English fashion, she had arranged in a sort of fringe beneath her bonnet, in place of a "cap" usually worn at that period, inside the brim!³⁰

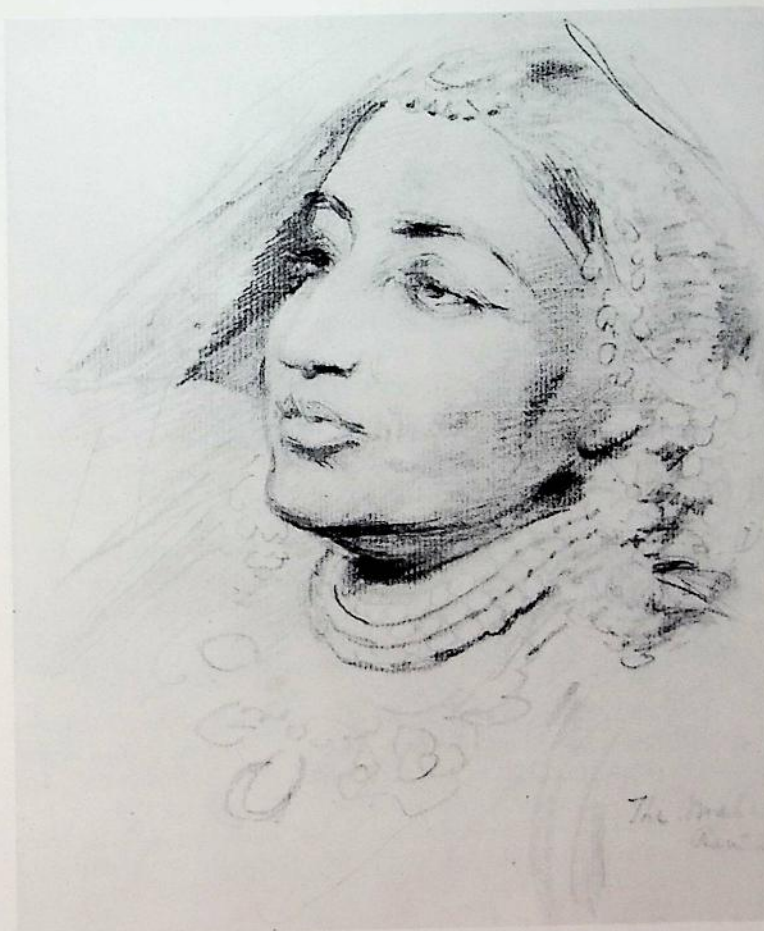
Wearing a scattering of these jewels, Rani Jindan gave sittings to the portrait-painter George Richmond (1809–1896), probably at the behest of her son. The sittings continued for three long days. She remained silent and uncommunicative throughout, much to the discomfort of the artist who is said 'to have disliked her cordially'. His swiftly executed pencil drawing catches more than a hint of those qualities of beguiling charm and reckless audacity which she bartered in her youth and squandered as a queen.

In 1862 the Maharaja arranged for the Rani to live separately and to be looked after by an English companion. She died quietly at Abingdon House, Kensington, in August 1863. She was forty-six years old, just three years older than Mary Queen of Scots when she went to the scaffold at Fotheringay Castle.

The remains of Rani Jindan were buried temporarily in an unconsecrated grave in Kensal Green Cemetery before they were taken by her son to India. There they were cremated and the ashes were immersed in the River Narbada. 'Her memory survived, for she was not a woman to be forgotten'.³¹

³⁰ Login (1890), 459, 460.

³¹ Edwardes (1851), II, 398.



Rani Jindan (1817–1863). Drawing by G. Richmond, London, c. 1863. Author's collection

CHAPTER FOUR

The Magnificent Squire of Elveden

Dalip Singh's life was not his fault. History condemned him to a role in Punjabi politics that he was neither old enough nor competent enough to turn to his lasting advantage; his fellow-Sikhs converted him into a symbolic sceptre of power; his mother alternately used and abused him; the British professed a fiduciary and paternal responsibility before betraying him; his adopted religion failed his expectations by rendering him in the ultimate analysis unacceptable to his Christian equals; and finally his immature vacillation and re-conversion destroyed the remnants of a frayed self-respect.

Dalip Singh was born on 6 September 1838. No one was ever sure of his paternity, and this unfortunate doubt blighted his life. Even the official record of his advent into the world betrayed a casual indifference: 'The horoscope of the *Sahibzada* (Dalip Singh) showed the presence of the zodiacal signs of Aquarius and Pisces. Therefore, it has not been written. Any intelligent man could easily comprehend the meaning thereof. If the Sarkar would earnestly desire, it would be stated.'¹ The Sarkar was not interested.

Overshadowed during the first few years of his life by Kharak Singh and Sher Singh, the first substantial record there is of Dalip Singh is the portrait of him painted by Schoefft in 1841 when he was three years old (Colour Plate III).² The child in an embroidered outfit smiles brightly from the canvas, oblivious to a portentous future. Behind him in the distance there is a glimpse of the Badshahi Masjid constructed by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1673 and used at the

¹ Suri (1961), 525.

² Login, writing to his wife from the Lahore Fort on 5 September, 1849, tells her: 'Yesterday was the birthday of the little Maharaja: he is now eleven, and entering his twelfth year.' Login (1890), 174. According to Latif (1891), 556, the treaty of Bhyrowal was effective for the duration of the Maharaja's minority until 4 September, 1854.

time of Schoefft's visit as a magazine and store. The minarets (without the marble cupolas added later) from which Maharaja Sher Singh's gunners fired into the Fort during the siege are just visible.³ The painting must have been completed in a studio from on-the-spot sketches by Schoefft after his return to Europe for there are some minor inaccuracies in the arrangement of the buildings between the imaginary hill upon which Dalip Singh is seated and the mosque in the distance, apart from the incongruous, inexplicable touch of realism introduced by the small frog in the foreground looking up at the prince's feet.

The carnage, precipitated by Maharaja Sher Singh's assassination in September 1843, rendered Dalip Singh's life more precious with each drop of blood shed. Prince Dalip Singh was formally declared Maharaja of the Punjab less than ten days after his fifth birthday. Accepted commonly by all the factions as the Maharaja and Head of State, his physical presence assumed a critical importance. When, for example, the Khalsa had agitated against Raja Hira Singh and his abhorred Pandit Jalla Singh, it was the child Maharaja who was carried aloft in the elephant's howdah by his maternal uncle, Jawahir Singh. Again on 21 September 1845, Jawahir Singh, when required to appear before the Khalsa for having manoeuvred the death of Peshora Singh, made the child ride with him in the howdah as it moved through the silent ranks of the implacable Sikh force. Gardner's account remains a vivid record of the scene:

Jawahir Singh was next ordered to descend from his elephant. He lost his head, attempted to parley, and a tall Sikh slapped his face and took the boy Dhulip Singh from his arms, asking him how he dared disobey the Khalsa. Dhulip Singh was placed in his mother's arms, and she, hiding herself behind the walls of her tent, held the child up above them in view of the army, crying for mercy for her brother in the name of her son. Suddenly, hearing a yell of agony from a well-known voice, she flung the child away in an agony of grief and rage. Fortunately, he was caught by a soldier, or the consequences might have been fatal.⁴

The consequences were not fatal, but they were damaging and permanent in their impression. Years later he was to speak 'readily of his uncle Jawahir Singh,

³ Gardner (1898), 233.

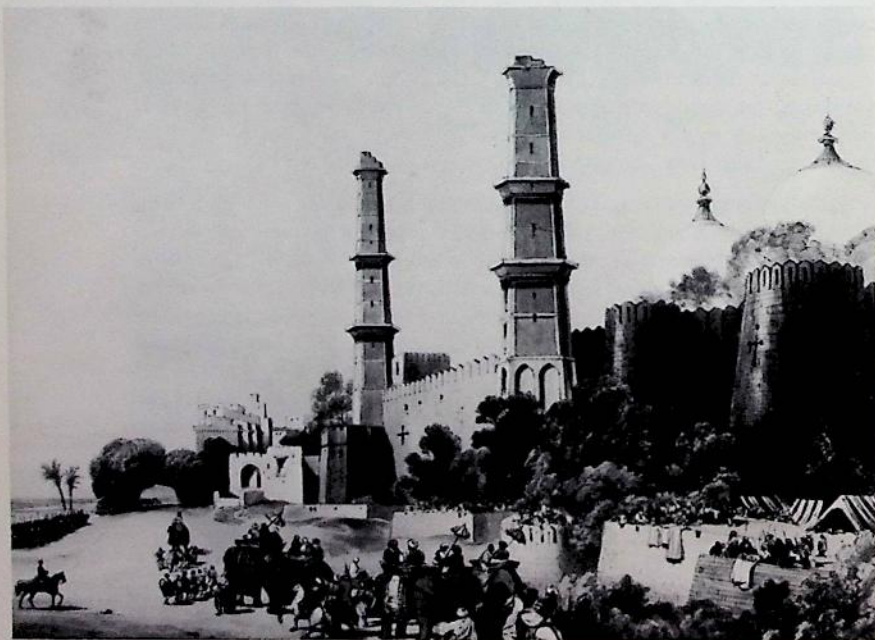
⁴ Gardner (1898), 260-261.

⁵ Login (1890), 239.

and his affection for him'⁵ and to admit 'a dread of his own countrymen, and a dislike to their religion and all connected with them.'⁶

It was left to the eight-year-old Dalip Singh to make the formal but nevertheless humiliating admission of defeat on behalf of the Sikhs before the Governor-General, Lord Hardinge, at Luliani on 18 February 1846. It was considered more prudent that he should remain with the Governor-General rather than return alone to the custody of his mother. He travelled to Lahore with a British escort and was accompanied as far as the gate of the Fort by Mr. Currie, the Chief Secretary to the Government, Major Lawrence, then the Political Agent, and a body of troops. From the doorway of the palace, Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu took charge and returned the pawn to the queen.

⁶ Login (1890), 257. '... This feeling towards them, he was, of course, obliged to conceal, until circumstances enabled him to declare his sentiments.'



The procession of Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838–1893) returning to the Lahore Fort, February, 1846. Lithograph after an original drawing by C.S. Hardinge. Author's collection



Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838–1893). Lithograph after an original drawing by C.S. Hardinge, Lahore, February, 1846. Author's collection

Portraits of Dalip Singh at this age show a plump child, wearing a rich turban afire with jewels. The standard oval miniature of the child-king became a popular curio in India, while to the eager public outside India, suddenly aware of the drama in the Punjab, it appeared as a touching drawing of the self-conscious young Maharaja. perched on an ample cushioned throne.⁷

⁷ Hardinge (1847), pl. 1.

By the end of the year it had become clear that the Sikh Darbar would need British troops to maintain law and order, but they would have to pay for it. By the treaty signed in Lahore on 18 December 1846, and ratified by the Governor-General at Bhyrowal, a Council of Regency was appointed consisting of eight elders at the Court: Raja Tej Singh, Raja Sher Singh Attariwala, Sardar Runjodh Singh, Fakir Nuruddin and Diwan Dina Nath, Bhai Nidhan Singh, Sardar Shamser Singh Sindhanwalia and Sardar Attar Singh Kallianwalla.

Later Dalip Singh's own interpretation of the practical implications and operation of this Treaty were clear and when referring to it in his famous letter written in 1882 to *The Times* newspaper, he contended:

The Council of Regency, which was then created to govern the country during my minority, finding that it was not in their power to rule the Punjab unaided, applied for assistance to the representative of the British Government, who, after stipulating for absolute power to control every Government department, entered into the Bhyrowal Treaty with me, by which was guaranteed that I should be protected on my throne until I attained the age of sixteen years, the British also furnishing troops both for the above object and preservation of peace in the country, in consideration of a certain sum to be paid to them annually by my Durbar, for the maintenance of that force.⁸

The annual price for stability in the Punjab was quoted by the British at twenty-two lakhs of rupees for 10,000 head of British troops. By contrast, Raja Gulab Singh's annual tribute to the British had been agreed at 'one horse, twelve perfect shawl goats, and three pairs of Kashmir shawls.'⁹ In truth, it was not stability being purchased by the Sikhs but time by the British. Realising that it would not have been feasible or practical to control such a large area of hostile territory, they needed time and the tacit cover of the Sikh Darbar.

The failure of this somewhat one-sided and unworkable arrangement was rectified by the Sikhs during the ill-conceived Second Sikh War, and by the British in drawing up the conclusive terms offered on 29 March 1849 to the Maharaja and his Darbar. These included resignation by the Maharaja 'for himself, his heirs, and his successors, all right, title, and claim to the Sovereignty of the Punjab, or to any Sovereign Power whatever', the confiscation of all State property, the surrender of the Koh-i-noor diamond to Queen Victoria,¹⁰ and a

⁸ *The Times* Thursday, 31 August, 1882.

⁹ Latif (1891), 555.

¹⁰ An interesting sidelight on Queen Victoria's attitude is contained in this extract from one of

pension to the Maharaja of not less than four but not more than five lakhs of rupees per annum provided he behaved himself. Perhaps the cruellest aspect of these terms was to maintain the charade of Dalip Singh's royal status. He was to continue to be titled 'Maharaja Duleep Singh Bahadoor' and to receive all respect and honour. Whatever may have been the political necessities in the circumstances, for Dalip Singh personally it was a disaster. He remained in limbo—a king without a kingdom, and a commoner without a homeland. Dr John Login, Surgeon of the Bengal Presidency at Lucknow and a friend of Sir Henry Lawrence, was informed of his appointment as the young Maharaja's tutor on 2 April 1849. He was introduced to his charge when he was installed as Governor of the Lahore Fort by Lawrence four days later. '... We get on swimmingly', Login wrote to his wife afterwards and strove to gain the confidence and trust of the young, virtually orphaned ex-ruler. It was not a difficult task. Through his letters, we get a glimpse from Login of the maturing Dalip Singh. He was, we learn, 'a fine-tempered boy, intelligent and handsome. He writes and reads Persian very well, and showed me his last copy; he had also made a little progress in English, which I hope to make him like better'.¹¹

For a child brought up in a strange and violent environment it was surprising that he should have exhibited anything less than a careless frivolity. His serious studies were not yet organised for him and he was left to pursue his own simple tastes. 'For amusements, he is passionately fond of hawking, and thinks of nothing else.'¹² He is busy getting up a book on the subject, in Persian, with drawings and paintings of all the various species of hawks; this takes up his whole attention, and renders him indifferent to all else for the time being. The book is to treat of all the approved ways of training and managing hawks. He has painters constantly employed near him at this work, which he watches with the deepest interest, and himself tries to draw and paint a little.'¹³

This interest in painting was to continue, while Dalip Singh was at the Fort and later on at Fatehgarh. Login described to his wife how the 'little Maharaja has been busy collecting for me drawings and paintings done by his best painters.

Dr Login's letters to his wife: 'He (Dalhousie) told me that Her Majesty was most anxious to see the jewels, and that it was all stuff about Her refusal to accept them'. Login (1890), 217.

¹¹ Login (1890), 154.

¹² It is possible that this reference led Dr Archer to identify the young child playing with a hawk in Plate I with Dalip Singh. See Archer (1966), 48.

¹³ Login (1890), 155–156.

Some are very curious and interesting indeed, representing domestic life in the Punjab, and various trades and professions. He has also selected authentic likenesses of the great chiefs and men of note.¹⁴ For Mrs. Login he chose portraits of himself, which he inscribed in Persian and in English. Login's opinion of the pictures was that he didn't think 'the likenesses are good enough, for he is really a handsome little fellow.'¹⁵

Dalip Singh's removal from the Punjab had been postponed until the end of the year and so, in December after suitable arrangements had been made to ensure his safety from the possibility of abduction, Dr Login and his controversial charge left Lahore for Fatehgarh. They were accompanied by Shahzada Deo, the only legitimate surviving son of Maharaja Sher Singh, and his mother. They travelled via Saharanpur, through Meerut until they reached their new lodgings at Fatehgarh on or around 18 February, 1850.

Within six months, Login was on the look out for a suitable wife for his 'little boy', as he called him affectionately. 'He says I am his "Ma-Bap," and he trusts to me to do what may be necessary for his happiness. He will have nothing to do, he says, with Shere Singh's sister, to whom he was betrothed, so I am left quite at liberty to choose for him.'¹⁶

Dalip Singh had been affianced to the daughter of Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala as a child. The old Sardar had in 1848 sent a message to Major Lawrence suggesting that as he had only two ambitions in life left to fulfil—to perform the marriage of his daughter and to go on pilgrimage, he would like to complete the first before embarking on the second.¹⁷ No decision could be taken at the time, and with Dalip Singh growing older day by day and forming his own opinions on the subject of marriage, the chances of his marrying a Sikh receded proportionately. His entourage thought that he might consider marrying Sher Singh's widow but he showed no serious inclination towards her either.

Login then heard of the daughters of the Raja of Coorg and singled out the younger one—'fair and good-looking, and also intelligent, with decided marks of good blood and lineage about her.' He expressed his views on Dalip Singh's future education and possible marriage to Lord Dalhousie, who replied 'I think your plans for the Maharajah are all on too large a scale, and that you seem to have

¹⁴ Login (1890), 160.

¹⁵ Login (1890), 158.

¹⁶ Login (1890), 220.

¹⁷ Papers (1849), 272.



Sir John Spencer Login (1810–1863), London, c. 1860

contemplated for him a future much more royal than is intended.' As regards marriage Dalhousie was emphatic in his views: 'I should object decidedly, and do not wish to countenance any relations henceforth between the Maharajah and the Sikhs, either by alliance with a Sikh family, or sympathy with Sikh feeling.' Of the Coorg princesses, he informed Login 'There are two . . . both are good looking, the second one very pretty, and as far as birth is concerned, both are his equals and more.'¹⁸ Dalip Singh without realising it again became a casualty to a bankrupt patrimony.

While Dr Login was in Calcutta to meet his wife in December 1851, the news of Dalip Singh's desire to embrace Christianity was conveyed to him. Dalip Singh had taken this momentous and, in its way, inevitable decision on 8 December. He was thirteen years old. That he was to turn Christian ultimately was ordained for Dalip Singh as soon as Login assumed charge. Recalling his letters one notices Login writing to his wife within a month of his arrival at Lahore 'I cannot put the Bible in his hands yet'.¹⁹ The reaction of his British custodians towards Dalip Singh's change of religion was less one of surprise than of apprehension lest his desire for conversion should prove to be impermanent and brought about by the artificial conditions in which the boy was being reared. A report was called for to ascertain whether any undue pressure or influence had been used to convert him. A statement made by Lala Bhajun Lal, the Maharaja's Brahmin attendant, was sent in reply. From this it was apparent that Dalip Singh had at last found a sympathetic environment in which to disclose his 'dislike'. His heart changed; liberated from the cumbersome traces which bound him to a ponderous tradition, he broke caste informally by making with his own hands an English cup of tea. He also wanted to shear his long hair but was prevailed upon by Mrs Login to wait until the completion of a period of probation before taking such a major step. The sensational news of his conversion soon became public knowledge. He became like Samson Agonistes

... to visitants a gaze,
Or pitied object; these redundant locks,
Robustious to no purpose, clustring down,
Vain monument of strength.

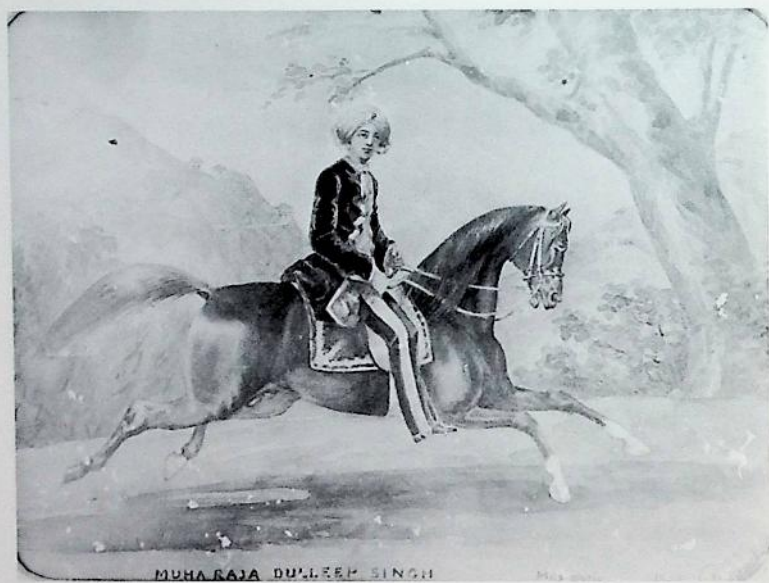
Dalip Singh spent two summers at the hill station of Mussoorie, the second after his formal baptism on 8 March 1853. He was painted in oils by George

¹⁸ Login (1890), 230, 231.

¹⁹ Login (1890), 159.



Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838–1893). Painting in oils by George Beechey (1798–1852). Mussoorie, 1852. Lady Broun-Lindsay, Haddington, East Lothian



Beechey (1798–1852) in 1852, and in the following year, that of his baptism, by an amateur water-colour artist, P. C. Trench, who depicted the Maharaja riding dressed in a 'semi-European style of dress . . . (which) consisted of the Sikh, embroidered *coortah*, or Cashmere tunic, and over that a single breasted velvet coat, richly embroidered in gold; English trousers, with a stripe of gold embroidery down the seams'.²⁰

Now safely Christian, groomed in the social graces of the Victorian age, and yearning as intensely to see the British as they were anxious to gaze at him, Dalip Singh felt it was the right time to apply for permission to go to England. Permission was granted on 31 January 1854, and within two months all was ready for his departure. Lord Dalhousie felt constrained to caution Dr. Login 'Pray press upon his Highness that while in India he receives all the honours of his rank—in England he will be entitled only to courtesy'.²¹ To prepare him for

²⁰ Login (1890), 335.

²¹ Login (1890), 329.

OPPOSITE

Maharaja Dalip Singh
(1838–1893) riding. Water-
colour by P. C. Trench,
Mussoorie, 1853. Princess
Bamba Collection, Lahore
Fort



Maharaja Dalip Singh
(1838–1893). Sketch by Queen
Victoria, August, 1854. Royal
Archives, Windsor Castle.

the martyrdom ahead Dalhousie presented Dalip Singh with a parting gift—he sent him a Bible.

Stopping for a short while at Cairo to do some sightseeing, Dalip Singh paid a visit to the American Mission Schools in Cairo where he was 'greatly interested to see so many orphan girls being educated in the Christian religion'.²² That visit was to have more than a passing relevance for him, for he was to choose his future bride from amongst them. Soon after he landed in England, the Court of Directors of the East India Company received this 'deposed young ruler of a warlike nation' and being reassured by his 'unassuming manners and quiet dignity' cleared him for an audience with the Queen and her husband Prince Albert.

'The Queen wishes to tell Lord Dalhousie how much interested and pleased we have been in making the acquaintance of the young Maharajah Dhuleep Singh', Queen Victoria wrote from Buckingham Palace on 26 July 1854. 'It is

²² Login (1890), 332.



not without mixed feelings of pain and sympathy that the Queen sees the young Prince, once destined to so high and powerful a position, and now reduced to so dependent a one by her arms; his youth, amiable character, and striking good looks, as well as his being a Christian, the first of his high rank who has embraced our faith, must incline every one favourably towards him, and it will be a pleasure to us to do all we can to be of use to him and to befriend and protect him.²³

Befriend him the Queen and her husband did, warmly and whole-heartedly, by admitting him into the intimacy of their circle. He was invited to stay with them at Windsor and at Osborne, and to play with the royal children, in particular with Prince Albert Edward,²⁴ their eldest son known in the family as 'Bertie', and his younger brother Prince Alfred²⁵ who was nick-named 'Affie'.

²³ Letters (1907), 49.

²⁴ Prince Albert Edward was two years younger than Dalip Singh. He succeeded his mother as Edward VII in 1901 and died in 1910.

²⁵ Prince Alfred was the fourth child of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Born in 1844, he

OPPOSITE

Prince Alfred, later Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg
Gotha (1844-1900), and Prince Arthur, later
Duke of Connaught (1850-1942), in Indian dress.
Photograph by their father, Prince Albert, c. 1854



Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838-1893). Sketch by
Queen Victoria, July, 1854. Royal Archives,
Windsor Castle

Dalip Singh was accorded by Queen Victoria the status and rank of an European prince which entitled him to take precedence at official functions after the royal family, who treated him 'as if he were one of themselves'.²⁶ Prince Albert found spare time enough from his pre-occupations with the Crimean War to design a coat-of-arms for the displaced Maharaja. It showed a lion standing beneath a coronet surmounted by a five-pointed star—an unintentional, if unfortunate, repetition of the 'Lion of the Punjab' theme, which belonged more appropriately to Ranjit Singh. The motto the Prince chose for Dalip Singh was *Prodesse quam conspici*, translated as 'To do good rather than be conspicuous'.²⁷ Prince Albert proved far-sighted in his choice: Dalip Singh tried very hard to live up to the first part before trying to live down the second.

would have, therefore, been six years younger than Dalip Singh. He became Duke of Edinburgh and of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, predeceasing his mother in 1900.

²⁶ Login (1890), 348.

²⁷ Login (1890), 468.

Dalip Singh's 'striking good looks' he owed to his mother whom he resembled. Compare, for instance, the portrait²⁸ of him painted on Queen Victoria's instructions by her favourite artist, Winterhalter²⁹ (Colour Plate VI) and later published as a lithograph, with the portrait-sketch associated with Rani Jindan. The similarity is startling. A bust by the Italian sculptor Marochetti³⁰ was also ordered and placed along with one of Princess Victoria Gouramma of Coorg in Windsor Castle. A plaster cast of it was later made for Princess Sophia, Dalip Singh's second daughter.

Everyone favoured a match between Dalip Singh and either of the two princesses of Coorg. Login, it will be recalled, had proposed such an alliance, albeit with the younger sister, to which Lord Dalhousie had given a forceful reaction. The Queen, who had a few years earlier supervised the christening of the elder girl and given to her the fashionable name of Victoria, added her own opinions to those already expressed: 'Agreeing as she does with Lord Dalhousie in the wisdom of advising the young man to pause before he makes his choice of a wife, she thinks such a marriage between these two most interesting young Christians most desirable; indeed, as Lord Dalhousie himself observes, the difficulty of any other marriage for either must be great.'³¹

The match seemed highly suitable to everyone, that is, except Dalip Singh. To him, his status now stood defined. The period of his minority was almost over and the necessary period of probation before he was formally admitted, through the advantages of a good marriage, to the ranks of the aristocracy was complete. He knew what he wanted: 'an English woman alone would fulfil his ideal of a wife'.³²

²⁸ Dalip Singh gave sittings twice a week for the portrait, a full-length one, to Winterhalter at Buckingham Palace. The portrait and its reproduction for public sale must have been completed by March, 1855, for we read of Sir John Login (he had been knighted in November, 1854) telling Lord Dalhousie on 9 April 1855, that in his opinion 'the artist has been most successful'. Login (1890), 353.

²⁹ The portrait is in Osborne House, Isle of Wight. It has been reproduced in Khan (1961), pl. I.

³⁰ Reproduced in Khan (1961), pl. XI. Some years afterwards, Baron Marochetti executed the doleful task of sculpting the white marble statues of both Prince Albert and Queen Victoria for the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore in Windsor Great Park, where Prince Albert was buried. Queen Victoria insisted on having her effigy prepared at the same time as that of her late husband lest there be a discrepancy in their ages as they lay together awaiting the Resurrection.

³¹ Letters (1907), 69.

³² Login (1890), 444.



Princess Victoria Gouramma (1841–1864). Engraving after an original painting by Franz Winterhalter, 1852. Author's collection

Queen Victoria maintained her interest in the young prince whom she regarded as 'a bright example to all Indian princes, for he is thoroughly good and amiable, and most anxious to improve himself'. She invited him regularly to Court. He dressed up for the occasion in a colourful, almost theatrical, costume (Colour Plate VII). Around his neck he wore strings of pearls and hanging from them the miniature of the Queen, which had been given to him by Lord Hardinge,³³ in his ears were large gold ear-rings and on his shorn head a brocade turban adorned with dripping emeralds. He swathed a tissue shawl around him and bound it about his waist with an embroidered belt, from which hung an impotent sword in its scabbard. He looked Sikh and picturesque, decorative but quite out of place.³⁴

Dalip Singh's loyalty to the Queen was in its own manner deep and sincerely felt. She had been kind to him personally and he returned the favour in as grand a manner as he thought befitting. Carried away by the aura that surrounded both the Koh-i-noor and the Queen, when he was shown the re-cut diamond during one of his sittings for the Winterhalter portrait, according to Lady Login who was present, 'Duleep Singh walked across the room, and with a low obeisance, presented the Koh-i-noor to his Sovereign, expressing in a few graceful words the pleasure it afforded him to have this opportunity of *himself* placing it in her hands'.³⁵ Then, having proffered with a generous gesture that which was no longer his to give, he continued with the sitting. Disraeli's bestowal of the Imperial crown of India had been anticipated by twenty years.

Before leaving for a tour of the Continent, Dalip Singh sent a letter on 9 December 1856 to the Directors of the East India Company drawing their attention to the fact that he was now eighteen years old and therefore of age, although the Treaty of Bhyrowal had envisaged him coming of age when he was sixteen. He asked them that satisfactory provision should be made for him and his

³³ Gower (1905), 170.

³⁴ Dressed in this conspicuous costume, Dalip Singh attended the marriage ceremony of Prince Albert Edward (later King Edward VII) and Princess Alexandra of Denmark on 10 March 1863 in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and was included by W. P. Frith in his famous study *The Marriage of the Prince of Wales* commissioned by Queen Victoria to commemorate the event.

Frith recalled later in his memoirs that Dalip Singh 'had a face of a handsome type, but somewhat expressionless'.

³⁵ Login (1890), 342.

dependents after reviewing, as he put it, 'my former rank, my present recognized position, and the expenses necessary for its proper maintenance.'

Queen Victoria took up the cudgels on his behalf while he was holidaying in Italy. In a memorandum written by her while she was at Osborne for Christmas, she minuted: 'The Queen has seen the Memorandum which the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh has sent to the East India Company; she thinks all he asks very fair and reasonable, and she trusts that the East India Company will be able to comply with them'.

Realising that she had put her views perhaps too bluntly, the Queen proceeded to tone them down: 'As we are in complete possession since 1849 of the Maharajah's enormous and splendid Kingdom, the Queen thinks we ought to do *everything* (which does not interfere with the safety of her Indian dominions) to render the position of this interesting and peculiarly good and amiable Prince as agreeable as possible, and not to let him have the feeling that he is a *prisoner*'. With a seeming sigh of satisfaction, she added: 'His being a Christian and completely European (or rather more English) in his habits and feelings, renders this much more necessary, and at the same time more easy'.³⁶

Dalip Singh remained abroad for four months, travelling under the pseudonym of 'Mr Login', as transparent an affectation as Queen Victoria's attempt to travel abroad incognito as the Countess of Balmoral. He returned from his holiday in May 1857 and found to his dismay that the Directors had not replied to his letter. He had, when writing to them, conveyed his intention of going to India in October 1857, but within a month of his return to London, a dramatic change took place in Anglo-Indian affairs. The Mutiny of June 1857 exploded. For Dalip Singh, it proved to be a time of trial, and of exposure. Those about him expected this 'bright example' to react in public, to express with some feeling words the principles of impartiality of 'one who had been brought up on English bread',³⁷ but they waited in vain. Lord Clarendon felt that 'the Maharaja was of an unfeeling and cruel disposition',³⁸ and said so; Queen Victoria retorted by scoffing that 'it was hardly to be expected that he (naturally of a negative, though gentle and very amiable disposition) should pronounce an

³⁶ Letters (1907), 278-279.

³⁷ Latif (1891), 574.

³⁸ Login (1890), 406.

opinion on so painful a subject, attached as he is to his country, and naturally *still* possessing, with all his amiability and goodness, an *Eastern nature*';³⁹ Sir Charles Phipps, her Private Secretary, concurred: 'I cannot believe that the Maharajah has any cruelty in his disposition'; but it was left to Dalip Singh's 'Ma-Bap', Sir John Login, to pass the final damning verdict. 'I *have* been a little disappointed' he admitted to Phipps, 'that he has shown so much indifference on the subject of the treacheries and cruelties perpetrated in India by the mutineers, and that he has scarcely admitted the propriety of abstaining from a few of the usual gaieties at this season'. Login continued sadly, 'I have still much to be thankful for in his character, although I have reluctantly been obliged to forego the hope, I at one time indulged, that he would take an active and foremost part in enlightening the people of India'.⁴⁰

The essential character of Dalip Singh lay bare. It must have cost Login a great personal effort to acknowledge and to admit the failure of his protégé who was so suddenly discovered to possess no heart. Was it, Login must have asked himself, an inordinate passion for hawking with its indifference to suffering that had brought about this heartlessness, this barbarity in his oriental character? Or was it—as Login hoped—a conscientious Christian desire by Dalip Singh to be seen as he really was? For Login, there was nothing left but to watch his charge cling to the two pillars which were his support in life—an amorphous royalty, and his Christian faith—both of which he would ultimately pull down in an act of self-destruction.

A full year after he had applied to the Court of Directors of the Company, it acceded to Dalip Singh's request and gave him permission to manage his own affairs. Three months later, Sir John Login transferred Dalip Singh's assets to his bankers. Dalip Singh celebrated his independence by arranging a shooting-party in Sardinia. Login was left behind to haggle about his own terms of retirement with the expiring East India Company.

Dalip Singh spent his time hunting and fishing, and it was mainly a tiger-shoot that lured him to India in December 1860. From Calcutta he grumbled to Login: 'Now, I must tell you that India is a beastly place! I heartily repent having come out, for I cannot get a moment's peace with people following me, and all my old servants bother the life out of me with questions'. Exasperated, he

³⁹ Letters (1907), 315.

⁴⁰ Login (1890), 407, 409.

complained 'I hate the natives, they are such liars, flatterers, and extremely deceitful! I would give anything to be back in dear England, among my friends!'⁴¹ But he did not have to give anything; Lord Canning obliged him by despatching the Maharaja and his mother back to 'dear England' instantly at the first sign of a demonstration by some Sikh soldiers outside his hotel. Sir John Login and Rani Jindan met for the first time in London. Login had been a composite parent to Dalip Singh ('he was . . . more than a father!') he was later to cry out in grief at Login's graveside) but he could not compete with the instinctive natural sympathy between a mother and her son, and which was now Rani Jindan's last trump card. Within months she had her son writing to Login about his private property in the Punjab such as the salt mines at Pind Dadan Khan⁴² and lapsing into 'native habits'. By September, he was doubting his faith. One moment, he was ready to 'throw up all his worldly prospects, and to return to India . . . to evangelize the heathen' and the next he was lamenting: 'I feel it very difficult to lead a Christian life'. The Rani schemed to the last; before dying in 1863 she sowed the seeds of disquiet in his receptive mind. Her timing could not have been better for her, or worse for Dalip Singh. For good measure, she left him the inheritance of her erratic judgement.

Within two months of Rani Jindan's death, Sir John Login also died. Dalip Singh was now truly orphaned and alone. Face to face with reality, he backed away from his ambitions. Fearing that his ideal of an English woman might turn out to be 'a worldly woman', he sought instead 'some young girl whom he might train to be a helpmeet to him'. On the way to India with his mother's remains, he again visited the American Mission School in Cairo that he had been

⁴¹ Login (1890), 455.

⁴² Burnes recalled the condition in the mines when he paid a visit there after leaving Ranjit Singh in 1832. 'We found about 100 persons at work in one of the mines, who were as much surprised to see us, as we were to behold the bright and beautiful crystals of red salt which formed the walls of the cave. We converted our visit into a day of rejoicing, by a liberal distribution of some of the money which was everywhere heaped upon us, nor could it be better bestowed, for the poor creatures presented to us a spectacle of misery. Mothers with their infants, children and old men, were alike employed in bringing the salt to the surface, and their cadaverous looks and stifled breathing excited the utmost compassion. We gave them a rupee each, the value of which could be justly appreciated, since they could only earn it after extracting 2000 pounds of salt.' Burnes (1834), I, 50-51.

The current rate is Rs. 15 for the same number of pounds.



Maharani Bamba Dalip Singh (1847–1887). Miniature on porcelain, c. 1864. Royal Collection, Osborne House

to eighteen years earlier, and selected just such an amenable girl.⁴³ Bamba was under sixteen years old, and nine years younger than Dalip Singh. With her father, a European merchant named Muller, and her mother, an Abyssinian, the new Maharani was as far removed from the patrician aspirations of her husband as could have been possible.⁴⁴ She spoke only Arabic, possessed a shy, retiring temperament and never quite understood Dalip Singh.

Neither did the British Government, to whom the responsibility for India and its non-resident princes had been transferred from the East India Company. Since, it was accepted that the Maharaja would settle more or less permanently in England, he was given assistance to buy an estate at Elveden in Suffolk for £138,000, and to renovate the house for another £22,000. He gained possession of it in September 1863, and had moved in by November. It was to Elveden Hall that he brought his wife, the young school-mistress turned pupil. She was taught English and presented at Court to Queen Victoria who found her 'un-assuming manners' quite as disarming as the Court of Directors of the East India Company had found Dalip Singh's first innocence.

'If you could only keep down his fat!'⁴⁵ Lord Dalhousie had written to Dr. Login in 1852, when Dalip Singh was only fourteen years old. The tendency to put on weight became more apparent as he grew older until he looked uncomfortably corpulent, as can be seen in the painting of him by Captain Goldingham (Colour Plate VIII). Still sporting the pseudo-Sikh costume (now noticeably an affectation) and wearing the chain and star of the Order of the Star of India⁴⁶ to which he had been admitted as a Knight Grand Cross by Prince Albert, the Prince Consort, in 1861, he was portrayed with fewer jewels than seen in his earlier portrait. Their depletion is an obvious clue to his shrinking financial condition.

Lady Login writes of him 'engaged in composing an opera' and claims that 'she knew nothing of his money difficulties until July 1883'. It was an unfair and inaccurate evasion on her part. Dalip Singh in August 1882 had already written to *The Times* and addressed his grievances to the British nation and 'Gladstone the Just'. On the same day, *The Times* editorial published its stinging comment on his letter. Lady Login of all people could surely not have missed that issue.

The truth was that, like Lady Login, the British nation, from whom Lord Dalhousie had warned that only consideration could be expected, had exhausted

⁴³ Latif (1891), 574 describes her as 'an Egyptian Christian lady', Dalip Singh's pedigree as a 'German lady'. It was hardly surprising that even long after her death her daughter and namesake, Princess Bamba Sutherland, never mentioned her except to intimate friends.

⁴⁴ *The Annual Register* for 1893 (London, 1894), Part II, 192, explained that her 'face had attracted his notice when he was distributing prizes at a school in Alexandria.'

⁴⁵ Login (1890), 292.

⁴⁶ The Order of the Star of India had been founded on 5 July 1861.

its interest in the ex-Maharaja of the Punjab. Under Disraeli's Government Victoria had been proclaimed Queen Empress of India six years earlier. On the very day that Dalip Singh was drafting his reply to correct the 'many inaccuracies as to matters of fact' contained in *The Times* editorial, the British public was celebrating the defeat of the forces of the Arabi Pasha by British troops at Tel-el-Kabir. The country was too excited, and the British Government too relieved at restoring access to India through the Suez Canal, to be concerned with the magnificent squire of Elveden and, as described by Sir Charles Phipps, his 'chronic state of contest with the Government authorities'. To Dalip Singh, it was a war of right, a holy war. He was convinced of his right; he needed only to be convinced of his religion. His royal status having been derided in *The Times*, that very forum which he had hoped would act as a mediator between himself and the implacable Government, he exerted his strength to destroy the second of his supports. Early in 1886, with his wife and six children, he boarded a steamer for India, 'done with England and her hypocrisies for ever!'

He gave advance notice of his intentions to a journal in Bombay and so stirred the authorities into taking him seriously, at least for a while. He was stopped en route⁴⁷ at Aden on 20 April, and was informed that if he wished to continue to India he would be permitted leave to stay only in the Madras Presidency, nowhere near the Punjab which was his destination. His wife returned to England with the children and died the following year 'of sorrow'. Dalip Singh remained as a guest in the Residency at Aden, waiting for the Government to change its mind. As he had announced his decision to revert to Sikhism, permission was given for some of his more orthodox relatives to be present at the re-conversion⁴⁸ ceremony in the Residency.

Within a few weeks his health began to falter and, unable to withstand the savage heat of the oriental summer, he moved to France. After an abortive

⁴⁷ Login (1890), 495, writes of him being 'arrested' at Aden.

⁴⁸ A ceremony of conversion has been described by Cunningham (1849), 77: 'The essentials are that five Sikhs at least should be assembled, and it is generally arranged that one of the number is of some religious repute. Some sugar and water are stirred together in a vessel of any kind, commonly with a two-edged dagger; but any iron weapon will answer. The novice stands with his hands joined in an attitude of humility or supplication, and he repeats after the elder or minister the main articles of his faith. Some of the water is sprinkled on his face and person; he drinks the remainder, and exclaims, Hail Gooroo! and the ceremony concludes with an injunction to be true to God, and to his duty as a Sikh'.

attempt to recruit Czar Alexander III of Russia⁴⁹ as an ally offering the support of the Punjab to the Czar as meaninglessly and with as little authority as he had presented the Koh-i-noor to Queen Victoria earlier, Dalip Singh returned to Paris.

Three years later, on 19 July 1890, weakened and contrite, his change of heart the inexorable sequel to the humiliating change in his circumstances, Maharaja Dalip Singh dictated a doleful note to Lady Login from his bedroom in the Grand Hotel, Paris:

Dear Lady Login,

I have been struck down by the hand of God! I am lying ill here with a stroke of paralysis, and as the sickness may be unto death, I pray you to forgive me all I might have said against you.

I have written to ask pardon from the Queen, and should I get better, my son is determined to drag me to England, where I shall hope to see you once more, and shake hands, and let by-gones be by-gones.

Your affectionate,
Duleep Singh.⁵⁰

Lady Login immediately passed on to Queen Victoria, as she had done consistently earlier, this latest movement in Dalip Singh's oscillating behaviour. The Queen agreed to receive Dalip Singh. On 31 March 1891, he drove from Nice to her hotel in Grasse, France, where she was on holiday. He was calm at first, but gradually broke down and wept beside her. After their first meeting thirty-seven years before, she had written about him to Lord Dalhousie with 'mixed feelings of pain and sympathy'; now, with the same hand, she stroked his reassuringly.⁵¹

A royal pardon was granted and his previous pension 'which the British Government had been compelled to discontinue, was generously restored, and the arrears discharged. It being the Queen's personal command that Dalip Singh's return to his former position in England should be made as easy and

⁴⁹ Czar Alexander III (r. 1881-1894), the second son of Alexander II, succeeded his father upon the latter's assassination. He was married to Marie Feodrovna (née Dagmar), a sister of Queen Alexandra and therefore a relation by marriage to King Edward VII. Alexander III died in 1894 at the age of forty-nine.

⁵⁰ Login (1916), 269.

⁵¹ Mallet (1968), 48.

gentle as possible, his subsequent prayer to be restored to the order of the Star of India, as a G.C.S.I., was also graciously granted.⁵²

Maharaja Dalip Singh returned once to England in April 1893 for a brief visit to be present at the deathbed of his youngest son, Edward. Five months later, he died suddenly at the age of fifty-five, at the Hotel de la Trémouille in Paris. He was buried next to his wife Maharani Bamba⁵³ in the churchyard of the church within the grounds of Elveden Hall.

⁵² Latif (1891), 628.

⁵³ *The Annual Register* for 1893 (London, 1894), 192–193, records that Dalip Singh while in Paris had ‘taken unto himself an English wife’ who bore him two daughters.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Bus-stop at Lahore

'Nothing is more painful for *any* one than the thought that their children and grand children have no future, and may become absolutely beggars. How much more *dreadful* must this be to proud people, who . . . are the sons and grand-sons of great Princes',¹ Queen Victoria had written to Lord Dalhousie in October 1854, discussing Dalip Singh's bleak future. Her far-sighted and humane observation regarding Ranjit Singh's descendants proved painfully true. The six young children whom Dalip Singh's wife brought back to England in 1886 with her after the Aden fiasco were, after her death in the following year, left to be reared by the British Government.

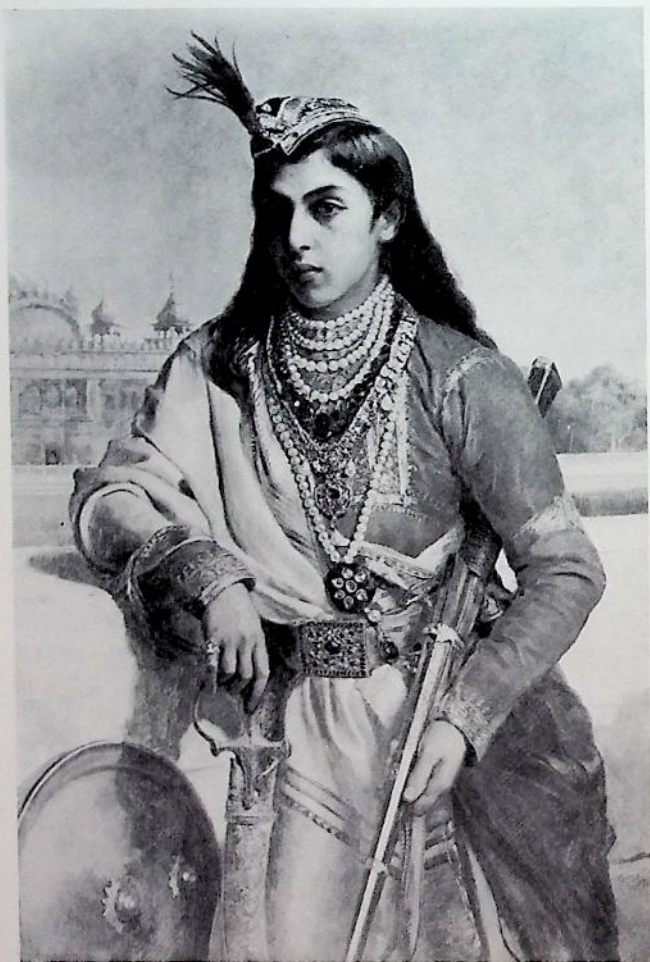
The eldest son, Prince Victor Dalip Singh, born in 1867 and named after H.R.H. Prince Albert Victor of Wales, was given an education at Eton and at Cambridge. In 1888 he was granted a commission in the 1st Royal Dragoons, was promoted to the rank of Captain in 1894 six years later, and served for two years as an honorary A.D.C. to Lieutenant-General Ross in Nova Scotia, Canada. An allowance of £2000 a year was settled on him by the India Office.² He married Lady Anne Coventry in 1898, and died childless in June 1918, at the age of fifty-one.

The second child, Prince Frederick Dalip Singh, born in 1868, a year after his brother, was named like him after another royal friend, this time the German Crown Prince Frederick (later Emperor Frederick III), who had married Princess Victoria, Queen Victoria's eldest daughter and a childhood companion of Dalip Singh. After being educated at Cambridge, Prince Frederick Dalip Singh joined the army and served in the Norfolk Yeomanry. An inscription on the portrait of him in 1909 by Leslie Poole-Smith³ states him to be a Major and a Member of the Victorian Order. He died in 1926. Of the remaining four

¹ Letters (1907), 60.

² Login (1890), 495.

³ Reproduced in Khan (1961), pl. X.



Prince Victor Albert Dalip Singh (1867–1918). Painting in oils by S. Hall, 1879. Royal Collection, Osborne House



Prince Frederick Dalip Singh (1868–1926). Photograph, c. 1897. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort



Prince Frederick Dalip Singh (1868–1926). Drawing in pastels by B. Ward, c. 1918. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort

children—Princess Bamba Jindan, Princess Catherine Hilda, Prince Albert Edward Dalip Singh and the youngest, Princess Sophia Alexandra, it is only Princess Bamba who has an immediate relevance to the subject of this study.



*Princess Bamba Dalip
Singh, later Mrs
Sutherland
(1869-1957).
Photograph taken on
the occasion of her
formal presentation
at Court, c. 1887.
Princess Bamba
Collection, Lahore
Fort*

Born on 29 September, 1869 in London, Princess Bamba, with her younger brother and sisters, was placed, on the death of their mother, under the care of their father's Equerry Mr. Arthur Oliphant and his wife at Folkestone.⁴ She was sent to Oxford for her university education, and later married a Colonel Sutherland. Princess Bamba remained in the United Kingdom for part of her life and finally settled in Lahore, at first in Jail Road and subsequently at 104A, Model Town. A fellow resident recorded her pathetic condition: 'Old "Princess" Sutherland, widow of an English army doctor, and last descendant of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was heard complaining that she could not get a seat in the lorry (bus), when all Punjab should have been hers! The old lady . . . spent her days dreaming about her ancestral glory'.⁵

She died at the age of eighty-eight, on Sunday, 10 March 1957. An item appeared in the newspaper the following day, giving a brief obituary and ending with the belief that 'the arrangements for her burial will be made by the United Kingdom Deputy High Commissioner, Lahore'.⁶ In fact her burial was arranged by her faithful secretary, Pir Karim Bakhsh Supra, to whom she bequeathed her property, including the collection of Schoefft's paintings, and some Sikh relics. She was laid to rest in the Gulberg Christian cemetery, two and a half miles across Lahore from the Fort. Neither the British nor the Sikhs were represented at her funeral. The Punjab was left to claim its own.

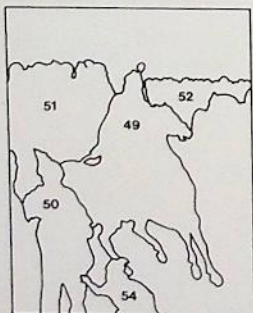
⁴ Login (1916), 258.

⁵ Tandon (1963), 242.

⁶ *The Pakistan Times*, Lahore, 11 March 1957.



IX *The Court of Lahore*. Painting in oils by August Schoeffl (1809–1888), c. 1850–1855, after original drawings made by the artist at Lahore, 1841. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort, Pakistan



x *The Court of Lahore*

DETAIL GROUP V

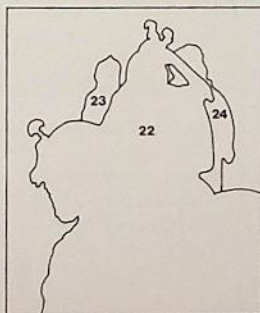
Lal Singh (49)

Akalis (50)

Irregular Cavalry (51)

Regular Infantry (52)

A war orphan (54)



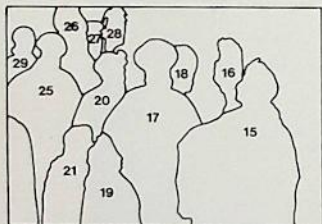
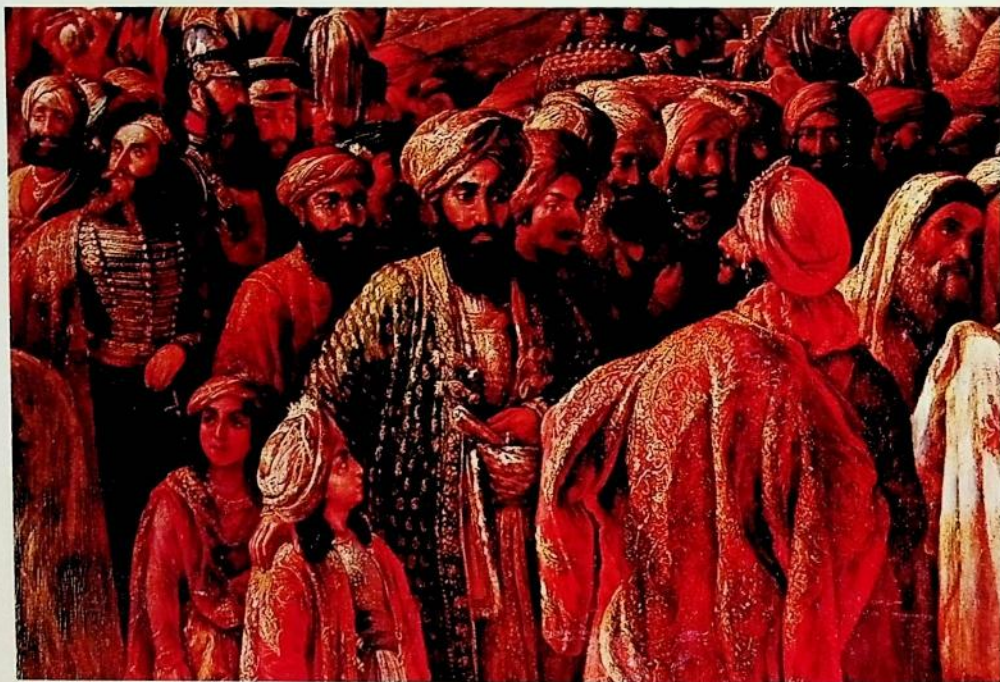
XI The Court of Lahore

DETAIL GROUP III

Sher Singh (22)

Pratap Singh (23)

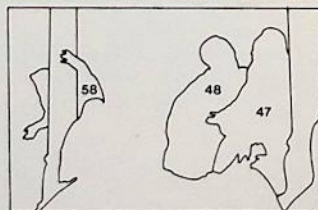
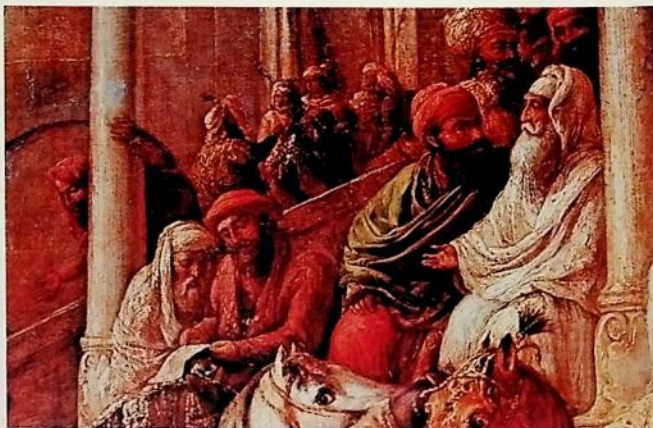
Lehna Singh Sindhanwalia (24)



XII *The Court of Lahore*

DETAIL GROUP III

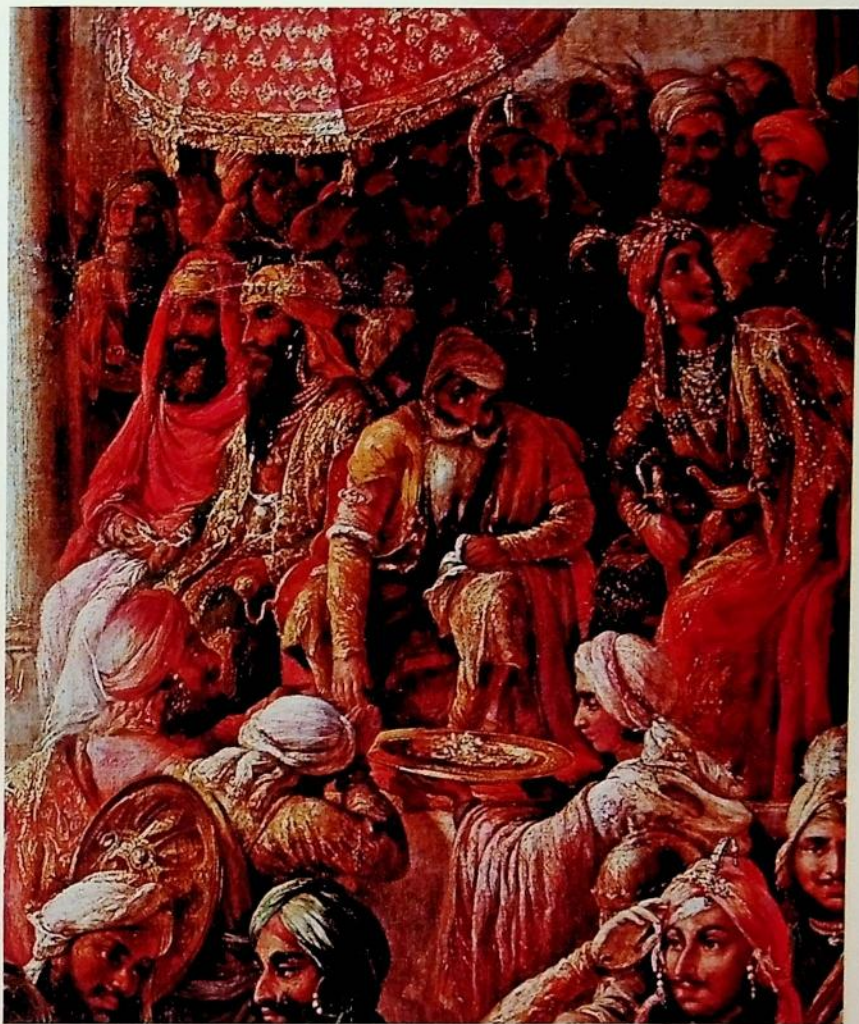
- Ajit Singh Sindhanwalia (15)
- Budh Singh (16)
- Sultan Mohamed Khan (17)
- Ali Khan (18)
- Mohamed Khan (19)
- Nawab Zulfiqar Khan (20)
- Ibrahim Khan (21)
- Dr Martin Honigberger (25)
- F. H. Mouton (26)
- De La Roche (27)
- De La Font (28)
- Fakir Chiraghuddin (29)



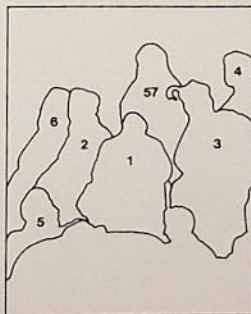
XIII *The Court of Lahore*

DETAIL GROUP V

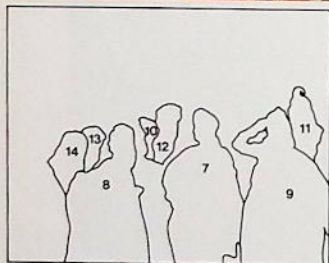
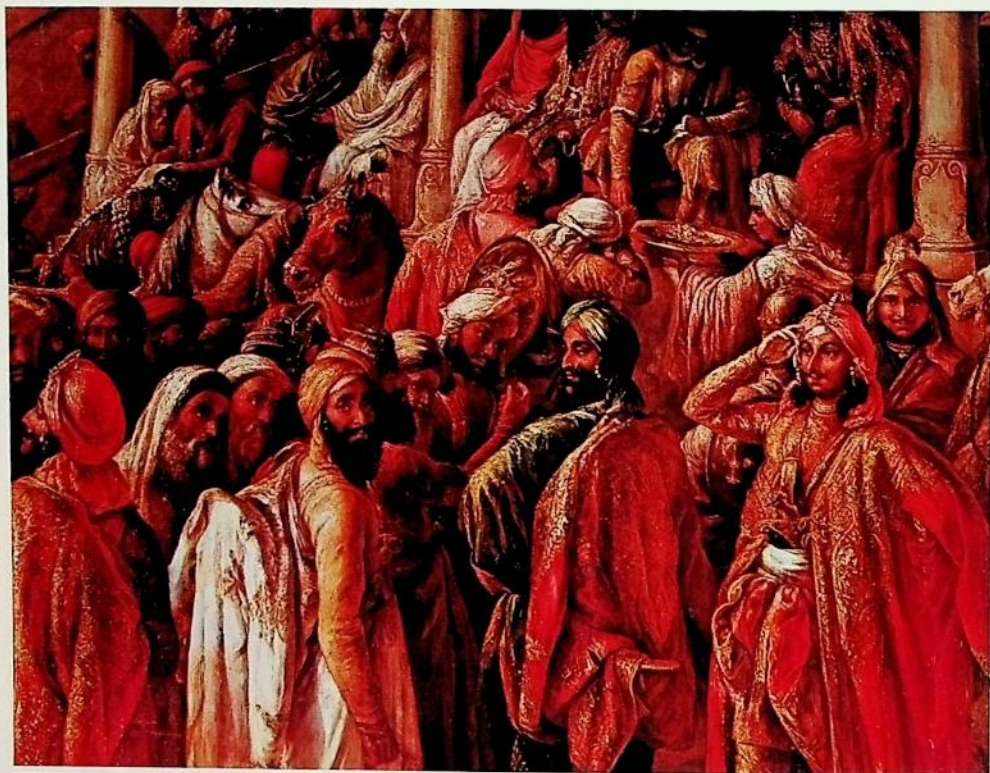
- Bhai Mia Singh (47)
- Munshi (48)
- Bodyguards (58)



XIV *The Court of Lahore*



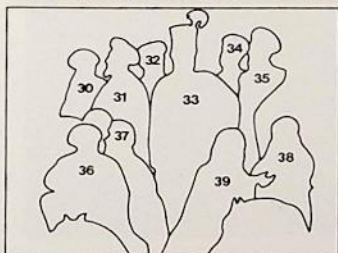
DETAIL GROUP 1
 Ranjit Singh (1)
 Kharak Singh (2)
 Nau Nehal Singh (3)
 Udham Singh (4)
 Gulab Singh (5)
 Bhai Ram Singh (6)
 Bodyguards (57)



xv *The Court of Lahore*

DETAIL GROUP II

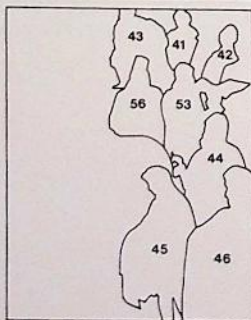
- Suchet Singh (7)
- Dhian Singh (8)
- Hira Singh (9)
- Tej Singh (10)
- Labh Singh (11)
- Lal Singh (12)
- Dina Nath (13)
- Fakir Azizuddin (14)



XVI *The Court of Lahore*

DETAIL GROUP IV

- J. F. Allard (30)
- P. B. Avitabile (31)
- J. B. Ventura (32)
- Foulkes (33)
- H. Steinbach (34)
- H. C. Von Cortland (35)
- Sham Singh Attariwala (36)
- Mehan Singh (37)
- Fakir Nuruddin (38)
- Fakir Haridas (39)



XVII *The Court of Lahore*

DETAIL GROUP V

- G. A. Court (40)
- Meka Singh (41)
- Bhai Gurmukh Singh (42)
- Attar Singh Sindhanwalia (43)
- Misir Beli Ram (44)
- A Jewel Carrier (45)
- Pur Singh (46)
- Servants (53)
- A horse-dealer from Kandahar (56)

PART II

*THE SIKH COURT
OF LAHORE*

PART II

The Sikh Court of Lahore

Biographical and other relevant notes on each of the identifiable figures in the painting of the Sikh Darbar, *The Court of Lahore*, by Schoefft are presented here in the same numerical sequence as that in which they appear in the catalogue notes to Schoefft's exhibition in 1855.¹

Original sources have been quoted in order to reconstruct each character from the recorded opinions held of him by his colleagues and contemporaries. Occasionally, loquacious individuals such as Dr Martin Honigberger will be found to be saying more about themselves than others may have said about them, but that was in a way inevitable. Not all those encountered by August Schoefft were blessed with his host's facility of expression. Excluding the Europeans, those of the Court who could express themselves candidly did so discreetly in the privacy of their diaries.² Of the *feranghees* employed by Ranjit Singh, only Dr Honigberger and Lt. Colonel Steinbach set down their recollections of their stay with the Sikhs in published form. Another, Colonel Alexander Gardner, gifted with a vivid, if unreliable memory³ also recorded his reminiscences but his portrait was excluded for some inexplicable reason by Schoefft from his painting.

Schoefft's 1855 catalogue notes on the characters have also been used as a guide, for although they were not comprehensive they clearly reveal the painter's reasons for including specific persons and often provide clues to the identity of the numerous personalities—the Sikh princes, their flamboyant courtiers, the plumed mercenaries, and the glittering extravagance which contributed to the impression of majesty left by the Sikh Court.

¹ *Der Hof von Lahor, und andere Bilder aus dem Oriente, gemalt von August Schöffl* (Vienna, 1855), 6–17.

² A daily *Roznamcha*, written by or for Fakir Azizuddin, is in the Punjab University Library, Lahore.

³ 'The man was a prize liar'. Grey (1929), ii.

GROUP I Colour Plate XIV

1 *Ranjit Singh (1780-1839)*

Born in 1780, of the Sukerchakia *misl*, Ranjit Singh was brought into prominence at the age of twelve upon the untimely death of his father, Maha Singh, in 1792. The adverse circumstances in which he found himself and the advantage to which he was able to turn these circumstances by the application of his iron will could not be summarised better than in this succinct analysis of his successful career.

When Ranjit Singh began to assume the place of the Sikh chief *par excellence*, the *machinery* of the Sikh confederacy was by no means of the best, but the *material* on which he had to work was of very fine quality. Any effective fighting machine must have a single controlling head, whereas the Sikh doctrines of brotherhood and equality made every chief kick at the idea of subordination. It may be observed generally that wherever there is theoretical equality the individual interprets that as meaning that *he* is as good as his neighbour, but his neighbour is not as good as *he*. So the chiefs had their followers, but every chief was reluctant to own a superior. Therefore the members of the 'Misl' were hard fighters, very difficult to cope with individually, but at the same time very difficult to organise collectively.

Hence, in order to raise the armed Sikhs into a formidable state, it was imperative that they should be induced to recognise some one head. It was absolutely necessary that any man seeking such recognition for himself should by force of character compel an acknowledgement of his personal superiority; in other words, he must show that he had a longer head and a stronger arm than any rival. But having a theoretical brotherhood to deal with, it was necessary to do a good deal more. Among the great mass of the Sikhs, equality of a kind, at least, was an essential article in a strongly held creed; and this could only be overcome if the would-be leader succeeded in inspiring strong personal enthusiasm.

Ranjit Singh possessed precisely the necessary qualities. His prowess in battle was beyond question; the vigour and shrewdness of his judgement were conspicuous; his promptitude of action was obvious. And he struck a note to which the heart of the Sikh people vibrated, by proclaiming himself always as the servant of the Guru Govind, and acting always in the name of Govind and to the glory of the Khalsa; in other words, he made it his business to pose

as a national hero, whether he was leading the Sikhs against the Moslem, upsetting a Sikh rival, appropriating the estates of a dead chief's heirs, or diplomatising with the British. By these means he won recognition, until by degrees the Maharaja of Lahore had consolidated the Punjab into the Lahore Kingdom.⁴

2 Kharak Singh (1802–1840)

The only legitimate son of Ranjit Singh, he was born in 1802 of Rani Raj Kaur (Mai Nak Kain) whom Ranjit Singh had married in 1798. Referred to almost unanimously in disparaging terms by various writers, he was addicted to opium and remained a continuous source of disappointment to his father. Kharak Singh in turn had one son, Nau Nehal Singh (No. 3), who was born in 1821 of Chand Kaur, an erstwhile Regent after the deaths of her husband and son in 1840.

The only redeeming feature in Kharak Singh's character appeared to be an abiding affection for his son, unreciprocated even to his last day.

3 Nau Nehal Singh (1821–1840)

Lauded by Steinbach as 'the Hotspur of the Sikhs',⁵ Nau Nehal Singh was described by McGregor as 'not a handsome man; for his countenance, like that of his grandfather, is strongly marked by the small-pox, yet, there is a steady determined look about him, which points him out as a person likely at some future period to emulate the present ruler of the Punjab and though Khurruk Singh will, no doubt, ascend the throne on the death of his father, it seems very doubtful how long he will be able to retain it'.⁶ The words were prophetic. Nau Nehal was officially Maharaja for only one day, 5 November 1840. He was killed by falling masonry when returning to the Fort on his way back from his father's cremation.

4 Udham Singh

Eldest son of Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu (No. 5), Udham Singh was a close companion of Nau Nehal Singh and accompanied him 'hand in hand' to their common death under falling masonry in November, 1840.

⁴ Gough and Innes (1897), 28–29.

⁵ Steinbach (1846), 24.

⁶ McGregor (1846) I, 252.

5 *Gulab Singh (1792–1857)*

Ruler of Jammu from 1822 and subsequently, after 1846, of Kashmir as well, Gulab Singh was the eldest of the Dogra rajas at the Sikh Court. Regarded with as much suspicion as Kharak Singh was with derision by all those who met him, he managed to pluck for himself all the spoils the Sikhs could ill afford. Smyth was unrestrained in his scathing invective against Gulab Singh: 'He exercised the most ruthless barbarities, not in the heat of conflict or the flush of victory only, nor in the rage of an offended sovereign against rebellious subjects; he deliberately committed the most horrible atrocities for the purpose of investing his name with a terror that should keep down all thoughts of resistance to his cruel sway. With all this he was courteous and polite in demeanour, and exhibited a suavity of manner and language that contrasted fearfully with the real disposition to which it formed an artfully designed but still transparent covering. He would be all things to all men, and displayed a readiness to adapt himself to the circumstances even of the humblest of his subjects that would have won all hearts, had not the tiger-nature that crouched beneath this fair-seeming exterior rendered him an object of distrust and terror'.⁷

Gulab Singh died in 1857 while taking a body of troops to assist the British during the Mutiny.

6 *Bhai Ram Singh*

One of the Sikh religious preceptors constantly in attendance on Maharaja Ranjit Singh and accorded by him the privilege of being seated in his presence. Sohan Lal Suri, the Court chronicler, invariably more Sikh than Ranjit Singh himself could be, enthused: '*Bhai Sahib* Ram Singh Ji, who was an embodiment of all the spiritual and secular sciences, was the resort of Divine Lights and Graces of God and was the unique person of the age'.⁸

GROUP II *Colour Plate XV*7 *Suchet Singh (1810–1844)*

Youngest brother of Raja Gulab Singh (No. 5) and Raja Dhian Singh (No. 8), Raja Suchet Singh was twenty-eight years old when in 1838 he impressed

⁷ Smyth (1847), 273.

⁸ Suri (1961), 32.

Osborne who thought him 'the very beau ideal of a Sikh chief'.⁹ Another contemporary who had the opportunity of seeing him over a continuous period was Colonel Gardner, whose opinion was no different to Osborne's spontaneous reaction. Gardner remembered him as 'a splendid swordsman, and the very pink of chivalry'.¹⁰ McGregor's view was equally rose-tinted: 'In his youth, and before debauchery had spoiled his looks, he was a very handsome man: muscular, agile, and well skilled in the use of the sword and matchlock; an excellent horseman: in short, a complete soldier. In his dress, Soochet Singh was particularly gorgeous, and wore a profusion of jewels'.¹¹ Falling victim to the mean politics with which he could not by temperament associate himself, he died at the hands of the Khalsa under his envious nephew Hira Singh (No. 9) in March 1844.

8 *Dhian Singh (1796-1843)*

One of the most able if not always the most scrupulous of Ranjit Singh's courtiers, Raja Dhian Singh owed his rise to power and wealth entirely to his royal patron's generosity. Using Ranjit Singh's affection for his son, Hira Singh, no less than he used his own studied attention to the person of the Maharaja to maintain the continuous radiance of patronage, he displayed a canny sense of timing, even when ostensibly beside himself with grief. Vigne was one of those who could separate the actor from the man.

Raja Dhihan Sing, the prime minister, was originally little more than a common suwar, or mounted Sepahi; with a pay not exceeding seven rupees a month. His handsome appearance—his skill in martial exercises—and his address in the hunting-field, procured him the especial favour of Runjit; who eventually created him the Rajah Rajghan or Rajah of Rajahs. He filled his office with ability and distinction; and perhaps, notwithstanding his faults, and a studied, but a dignified, insolence of demeanour, he was one of the best men, and the finest fellow, in the Punjab; which is not, however, saying much for him. He really was attached to Runjit; but his pretended attempt to throw himself upon his funeral pyre was nothing but a masterly piece of humbug.¹²

⁹ Osborne (1840), 64.

¹⁰ Gardner (1898), 254.

¹¹ McGregor (1846), II, 26.

¹² Vigne (1840), 249-250.

Perhaps the only occasion upon which his sense of caution deserted him was on 15 September 1843, when he took Ajit Singh Sindhanwalia (No. 15) literally and followed his finger as it pointed to the Sindhanwalia troops massed on the parapets of the Lahore Fort. A moment later, he was shot dead.

9 *Hira Singh* (c. 1816–1844)

The Dogra duckling who grew up into a swan, Raja Hira Singh was seen by the French traveller Jacquemont in 1831, who thought him 'an ugly little boy of ten'.¹³ Seven years later, Osborne found him 'strikingly handsome, though rather effeminate in appearance'.¹⁴ 'His influence over Runjeet is extraordinary', wrote Osborne with incredulity, 'and though acquired in a manner which in any other country would render him infamous for ever, here he is universally looked up to and respected'.¹⁵

Most observers were startled to discover the excessive familiarity between the Maharaja and his favourite, who was permitted to sit in the fond ruler's presence while his own father, Dhian Singh, stood behind the Maharaja's chair. To Jacquemont, amongst others, the obvious possibility was that Hira Singh might really be Ranjit Singh's 'best-loved son'.¹⁶ Hira Singh being permitted to address Ranjit Singh as '*taba*' (papa) was for Gardner additional confirmation of the possibility.¹⁷ Though popular with the army and perhaps the only Sikh leader endowed with a persuasive oratorical flair, he became a casualty to its fickle excesses in December 1844.

10 *Tej Singh*

Although regarded by one observer as 'plodding and untalented',¹⁸ this apparent bankruptcy of initiative did not stand in Sardar Tej Singh's way of his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh army in November 1845, preparatory to the outbreak of First Sikh War. His misjudgement at a crucial

¹³ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 42.

¹⁴ Osborne (1840), 77.

¹⁵ Osborne (1840), 76.

¹⁶ Eden (1866), II, 21. Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 60, had written: 'This is explained by the relations subsisting between the Rajah and the mother of this child at a time when it was possible for him to be its father'.

¹⁷ Gardner (1898), 212.

¹⁸ Mrs Mary Amelia Vansittart, quoted in Archer (1966), 15.

time during the battle of Ferozeshah on 22 December 1845, conceded victory unexpectedly to the British forces.

11 *Labh Singh*

One of the Sikh Sardars who supported Jawahir Singh, brother of Rani Jindan,¹⁹ Labh Singh gained access to the Court by denying others the same advantage of free admittance. According to Schoefft, he paid Rs. 200,000 a year for the post of Chamberlain and managed to exact from supplicants to the Court an income of twice that sum each year.

12 *Lal Singh*

Starting his spectacular career modestly as an assistant to Misr Beli Ram, the keeper of the *toshakhana*, Misr Lal Singh rose to be given separate control of a portion of the royal financial reserves. By June 1838, he was being ordered directly by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to give 'garments and other necessary things'²⁰ to the fakir Haridas (No. 39), a sadhu who claimed to be able to survive burial underground.

After Sher Singh's murder in 1843, Lal Singh moved closer to the throne and closer still to the amenable Rani Jindan, whose lover, adviser and Wazir he became in due course. He was described by a contemporary reporter in the following flattering words: 'an athletic person, of unusual height, even among the Sikhs, an open merry countenance, with rather a sensual expression, a boldly manly bearing, great ambition, and no scruples'.²¹

One of the prime protagonists in the Sikh Wars against the British, he continued to exercise power even after the first defeat of the Sikhs but was removed when he instigated Sheikh Imamuddin, Governor of Kashmir, to flout the provisions of the Treaty of Amritsar by not surrendering the state of Kashmir to its new owner, Gulab Singh. Lal Singh was tried on 3 and 4 December 1846, found guilty and exiled to Benares on a pension.²²

¹⁹ A portrait of Labh Singh has been published in McGregor (1846), II, frontispiece, and also Archer (1966), fig. 63.

²⁰ Suri (1961), 474.

²¹ Quoted in Hardinge (1847), text to pl. 13.

²² A portrait of Lal Singh has been reproduced in McGregor (1846), II, frontispiece.

13 *Dina Nath* (?-1857)

An opportunist, the Hindu Raja Dina Nath, like the Muslim Fakir Azizuddin (No. 14), subordinated any religious qualms he might have been expected to experience in serving a Sikh. His loyalty to the Maharaja was entirely personal. The control of the revenue collection was placed in his hands in 1834, and it was a measure of his success that, when Ranjit Singh died five years later, the contents of the royal *toshakhana* at Lahore and the Fort at Govindgarh were coveted as a fabled treasure.

As the Sikh Court after Ranjit Singh's death grew poorer, Dina Nath grew richer. He was appointed to the Regency Council in 1846, and later the title of Raja was conferred upon him. His loyalty to the Sikh cause was questioned by many. Griffin's conclusions on Dina Nath were unequivocal: 'Certain it is that on his being recalled to Lahore he zealously carried out the wishes of the British authorities in confiscating the property of the rebels and in counteracting their schemes.'²³ He died in the same year as that other staunch ally of the British, Maharaja Gulab Singh (No. 5), in 1857.

14 *Fakir Azizuddin* (c. 1785-1845)

The eldest of the three Muslim brothers who were able to serve Ranjit Singh simultaneously with promoting their own interests. Fakir Azizuddin and his brothers Fakir Nuruddin (No. 38) and Fakir Imamuddin (later Governor of Govindgarh Fort) paralleled the other fraternal trinity, the Dogra rajas, even to the use of a private code for communication, secret to the family.²⁴

Rising from the position of physician to Ranjit Singh to that of Foreign Minister, Fakir Azizuddin became, according to Emily Eden, 'his interpreter, and adviser and the comfort of his life'. Sighed Miss Eden: 'We all ought to have Uzeez-ood-deens of our own, if we wish to be really comfortable'.²⁵ Her

²³ Griffin (1892), 129.

²⁴ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 50, records that the Fakir brothers 'have devised a cypher which they use in correspondence among themselves and this artifice, hitherto, I believe, unknown in the East, gives them a reputation for great cleverness'. Steinbach (1846), 21, writing on the Dogras, notes that 'in their mutual correspondence made use of a cypher known only to themselves'. Steinbach may well have adapted Jacquemont's comments to his own purpose.

²⁵ Eden (1866), I, 297.

nephew's pencil sketch of Azizuddin²⁶ was used it would seem by Schoefft, and his pen-sketch by many historians since.

Lt-Colonel Steinbach (No. 34), writing a year after Azizuddin's death, included an evaluation of the senior Fakir's talents published in a Calcutta paper of the time:

He was a very able negotiator; insidious beyond measure, and a complete master of the science of humbug. He was the mouthpiece of the stupid Sikh sirdars, and as he almost always formed the head nominally of the missions they were occasionally sent on, he had their free leave to talk, while they sat by and listened in silence and admiration to the voluble flow of his ceaseless harangues. Nightingales of esteem warbled in meadows of attachment, and rivers of devotion rushed into oceans of affection, &c, &c. His other most important duty was interpreting the Maharajah's words. Few besides the Faquir, Dhyan Singh, Heera Singh, and a few attendants, could readily understand him, so severe had the paralysis of his tongue become latterly. A few inarticulate growlings of the old lion were quite enough to vivify the Faquir's imagination, and so lengthy often was his paraphrase of the Maharajah's verbal text, that one became inclined to wonder with Mons. Jourdain, 'whether one word in Turkish could mean so much?' But the Faquir knew business; he knew as well what words meant as any man that ever took up the profession of a diplomatist. Sometimes, towards the end of an entertainment, the Faquir's task of interpretation became very difficult: the Maharajah, adding the paralysis of strong drink to his natural inclination to indistinctness, used to become very inarticulate. The Faquir would then 'make shots' at the meaning, and got rebuked sometimes. He was often ashamed to say what he understood well enough, when he would content himself with saying '*Eysh, eysh*' (ecstasy); sometimes driven to total incomprehension, he would say, in his softest diplomatic tones (in Arabic, for the greater secrecy), '*Mafuhimtoo*'—i.e. 'I did not understand;' he would then be taken seriously ill, and disappear for the evening. He was an extraordinary anomaly, this man: a titular Mussulman Faquir serving the extirpators of his race and the persecutors of his religion, and that faithfully; assisting at their carousals, writing in the name of the Supreme Being as worshipped by them, and yet a bigoted Mussulman for all that. . . . He is indeed the last of the

²⁶ Osborne (1840), opp. 69.

ingenious diplomatists of Hindostan, of those men whose skill in the art has been so much and so long belauded.²⁷

Azizuddin's talents and relevance belonged to Ranjit Singh's age. Although deputed by Kharak Singh to visit Mr. Clerk, the British Resident at Ferozepur in May 1840, his participation in the affairs of the Sikh Court and his influence over them dwindled some years before his death on 3 December 1845. He was buried next to his father, Ghulam Mohyuddin, and his younger brother, Imamuddin (who died in 1844), in a small family graveyard near their *haveli* in Bazar Hakiman, Lahore.

GROUP III *Colour Plates XII & XI*

15 *Ajit Singh Sindhanwalia* (?–1843)

A son of Sardar Basawa Singh, Ajit Singh, was also a relation of Ranjit Singh. This close family link with the ruler was of abiding and gnawing significance to the Sindhanwalia clan, particularly the 'headstrong and rash' Ajit Singh,²⁸ who regarded the subsequent Sikh rulers and their coterie of changing favourites as parvenus. Given innocuous ceremonial duties such as receiving Lord Auckland and his sisters in December 1838, the young Sindhanwalia raja gained a sanguinary importance in Sikh politics after he murdered in cold blood Maharaja Sher Singh in 1843. Ajit Singh soon afterwards despatched Raja Dhian Singh (No. 8) and although declared Wazir in his stead, he was in turn killed by Hira Singh's troops. It was ironical that in the end his severed head should have shared the funeral pyre of his last victim.

16 *Budh Singh*

The loyal personal attendant of Maharaja Sher Singh (No. 22), Budh Singh must have been sketched by Schoefft from life. His inclusion in the Darbar picture was inevitable after the manner in which he lost his life defending Sher Singh in September 1843, which, after becoming publicly known, passed into history. Latif recounts the incident: 'As the Maharaja fell back a corpse, Ajit Singh, at one blow, severed his head from his body. Budh Singh, the armour-bearer of Sher Singh, came to the spot, immediately on hearing the report of the

²⁷ Steinbach (1846), 135–136.

²⁸ For portraits of Ajit Singh, see Osborne (1840), opp. 70, and Archer (1966), fig. 83.

gun. This brave man cut down two of Ajit Singh's followers, and aimed a blow at Ajit Singh himself, but the sword snapped in two. He ran to procure another, but, his foot slipping, he fell down, and was immediately despatched by Ajit Singh's followers'.²⁹

17 Sultan Mohamed Khan

One of the Barukzai brothers who held Peshawar as tributaries of Ranjit Singh, the career of Sultan Mohamed Khan, whether fighting on behalf of those of his own religion or for his Sikh ruler, remained on a permanent course of self-interest. Exhibiting an 'exceptional capacity for treachery', he turned against the British during the rebellion culminating in the Second Sikh War.

18 Ali Khan and

19 Mohamed Khan

Both sons of Sultan Mohamed Khan (No. 17).

20 Nawab Zulfiqar Khan

The second son of Nawab Muzaffar Khan, who was defeated and killed by Ranjit Singh's forces under Misr Dewan Chand and Kunwar Kharak Singh in June 1818. Zulfiqar Khan was brought to Ranjit Singh's court where he was received warmly by the victorious Maharaja who 'embraced the boy and made him sit beside him'.³⁰ This initial gesture of conciliation could hardly have been a healing compensation to the child for the loss of his father. Eighteen years later on 23 January 1836, Hugel was to notice the tense, latent hostility of Zulfiqar Khan and the other Muslim chiefs dispossessed by Ranjit Singh when they assembled at Lahore to visit the shrine of Madho Lal Hussain: 'The most remarkable figure was Zulfiqar Khan, one of the sons of the brave Mozaffer Khan, the former possessor of Multan, who entered with a proud bold bearing, and then squatted down immediately like the others, his forehead and cheek being marked with a deep scar, which somewhat relieves his excessively plain features'. Hugel continued: 'Most of the Mohammedan Sirdars sat with their left hand resting on the ground, their right grasping some weapon, which hung at their girdle; and as I watched their eyes sparkling with rage, and their compressed lips, I thought how

²⁹ Latif (1891), 513.

³⁰ Singh (1962), 126.

speedily one cry to arms would have converted this peaceful festival into a scene of blood'.³¹

21 *Ibrahim Khan*

Son of Nawab Zulfiqar Khan (No. 20).

22 *Sher Singh (1807–1843)*

'A fine, manly-looking fellow';³² 'extremely polite and amiable';³³ 'very intelligent';³⁴ 'good-natured and straight-forward';³⁵ 'such a gorgeous figure';³⁶ 'the son of a laundress';³⁷ Sher Singh was all things to all men, when he was not being a son to Ranjit Singh. He is portrayed by Schoefft mounted on a splendid horse, but one which he could perhaps ill-afford to maintain during Ranjit Singh's lifetime.³⁸ For a summary of Sher Singh's life and reign, see Chapter 2, 'The Lion's Lion'.

23 *Pratap Singh (1831–1843)*

The eldest son of Maharaja Sher Singh, Pratap Singh was born in 1831 to Prem Kaur whom Sher Singh had married in 1822. Presented at the age of three to Ranjit Singh during a visit to Batala, Sher Singh's jagir, the young child soon charmed the ageing Maharaja. On 25 August, 1835, for instance, the four year-old 'Kanwar Pratap Singh presented himself to the Maharaja, who inquired from him how far he was versed in Persian. He said, "I am reading 'Khaliq Bari'". The Maharaja listened to him and when he read out the verse "the word Allah is the personal name of God", the Maharaja smiled and patted him in humour and let him go'.³⁹ Soon Ranjit Singh was receiving reports from General Ventura

³¹ Hugel (1846), 340.

³² Osborne (1840), 64.

³³ Honigberger (1852), 169.

³⁴ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 55.

³⁵ Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 103.

³⁶ Eden (1866), II, 17.

³⁷ Quoted in Honigberger (1852), 136.

³⁸ The chronicle for 1836 reports that 'a reliable person of *Khalsa* Sher Singh . . . (stated) that the Shahzada was in a state of distraction on account of the shortage of even the necessities of life'. Suri (1961), 301.

³⁹ Suri (1961), 245.

(No. 32) that Pratap Singh 'was very good at shooting arrows and could strike at the aim',⁴⁰ and before long he was being given nominal responsibilities 'to engage himself in the protection of Lahore',⁴¹ and a year later in 1837 to deputise for his absent father during Ranjit Singh's subsequent sojourn at Batala.

As with his father before him, Pratap Singh's marriage was considered and discussed before the boy was six years old. To Ranjit Singh, any alliance with a ruling family in, say, Patiala or Nabha or in any state across the Sutlej was acceptable, provided the marriage took place in Sikh territory. If none agreed to this condition, then, the Maharaja felt 'the house of Dial Singh Moranwala was the best'.⁴²

The arrangements for escorting the British delegation in May 1838, headed by W. H. McNaughten and including Captain Osborne and Captain Wade, were made by Ranjit Singh. Orders were issued for Pratap Singh and Sardar Arjan Singh to receive them up to Mukerian and from there the delegation would be accompanied by Sher Singh, Suchet Singh and three other Sardars. Pratap Singh's manners as the receiving host were impeccable. Osborne was brimful with praise: 'He is one of the most intelligent boys I ever met with, very good looking, with singularly large and expressive eyes. His manners are in the highest degree attractive, polished, and gentlemanlike, and totally free from all the mauvaise haute and awkwardness so generally found in European children of that age'.⁴³

A day later, Osborne parted company with his 'young and very interesting friend'. Being given a gold watch and chain, Pratap Singh 'expressed his thanks in graceful terms, and concluded by saying, "You may tell Lord Auckland that the British Government will always find a friend in the son of Sher Sing"'. Then, mounting his horse, covered with plumes and jewels, he gracefully raised his hand to his forehead and galloped off with his escort, curvetting and caracoling round him in circles till he was out of sight'.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Suri (1961), 244.

⁴¹ Suri (1961), 354.

⁴² Suri (1961), 361.

⁴³ Osborne (1840), 57.

⁴⁴ Osborne (1840), 59-60.

Seven months later, Emily Eden fell under the boy's innocent spell. No more than Osborne, could she resist his 'eyes as big as saucers, and emeralds bigger than his eyes'.⁴⁵ Meeting Pratap Singh's mother Prem Kaur, Miss Eden teased her about the child. 'I told her that Shere Singh had made me a present of Pertab, and that I hoped she would let me take him to England. And she took it seriously; the tears came into those large eyes, and she said, "You have other amusements, and you are going back to your own country; there are four of us, and our only happiness is to see Pertab; in another country he would be as dead!" and then she put her little arms round him, and kissed him . . . and said she would die without him.'⁴⁶

When he was slaughtered by Lehna Singh Sindhanwalia (No. 24) on 15 September 1843 in the garden of Sardar Jawala Singh Padhani, close to Shah Bilawal, he was barely twelve years old. His mother never recovered, it seems, from the shock. One reads with poignant understanding that later in life she had adopted a boy named Narayan Singh. It was ironical perhaps that this grand-daughter-in-law of Sada Kaur should have repeated history by buying the child for fifty rupees from his father, Atar Singh of Sialkot district.⁴⁷

24 *Lehna Singh Sindhanwalia*

Lehna Singh, riding behind his unsuspecting victims, Sher Singh (No. 22) and Pratap Singh (No. 23) has been depicted in half-shadow, Schoefft taking care to stress the sinister association between the three characters.

'A man of energy, but illiterate and debauched'⁴⁸ Lehna Singh was also a 'clever mechanic'.⁴⁹ He was one of the main conspirators in the murder of Sher Singh in 1843, as well as one of the principal members of the Sindhanwalia group, all three of whom — Budh Singh, Atar Singh and Lehna Singh — were lampooned in this Punjabi proverb:

*Budh Singh di budh gai Atra di gai khushbu
Lahne da dena piya. Jo Alla kare, so ho (Panj.)*

⁴⁵ Eden (1866), I, 301.

⁴⁶ Eden (1866), II, 35.

⁴⁷ Griffin (1865), 9.

⁴⁸ Griffin and Massy (1909), I, 407.

⁴⁹ Osborne (1840), 80.

Budh Singh lost his sense (*budh*) and Atar (rose-water) his good smell.
Lahne (to take) had to give; what God does is done well!⁵⁰

25 *Dr Martin Honigberger*

Originally from the town of Kronstadt in Transylvania (now Rumania), Dr Honigberger, compelled by 'a secret impulse, an inward voice', left his home in 1815 for the East. His journeys through most of the countries of the Middle East, Russia and India were recollected by him on his return in 1850 in a fascinating memoir published two years later.⁵¹

Of immediate interest is the account he left of the two periods he spent at Lahore between 1829–1833, and 1839–1849. On the first occasion, it was while he was in Baghdad that he heard of the employment of the Generals Ventura, Allard, Court and Avitabile in Ranjit Singh's service, and of the vacancies for European doctors in the Sikh Army. It did not take much to lure the discontented Dr Honigberger away from Baghdad. He left armed with letters of introduction to the European Generals and landed at 'Bender—Karatshi' (Karachi) in February 1829. Moving on through Hyderabad towards Multan, he fell seriously ill at Khairpur. His condition worsened, and for a moment Dr Honigberger was convinced that he was about to die. He summoned a *vakil* to prepare his will and left instructions with his servant 'to bury me and convey my effects to Lahore, and deliver them, with my papers, to the Generals, Court and Avitable'.⁵² But by the next morning he had recovered, and within five days he was able to continue towards Lahore.

Honigberger describes the situation in Sind at the time. 'At that period, the Sindians were not yet acquainted with the English, although they were their neighbours, and accordingly we passed villages, where the people were not inclined to furnish us with provisions, even for payment. Our camel-driver advised us to lodge in the mosques, in order to be taken for Mohamedans. By so doing, we were provided with food gratis, by the hospitable musselmans. I and my servant were dressed in the costume of the inhabitants of Baghdad; we could speak the Persian, Arabic, and Turkish languages, had long beards, and addressed each other as Hajee, i.e. pilgrim. Our carpets, which constituted our beds, were quite similar, and were placed close to one another. We ate together,

⁵⁰ Vogel (1912), 167.

⁵¹ Honigberger (1852).

⁵² Honigberger (1852), 41.

according to the eastern custom, using our fingers instead of knives and forks; in fact, we played our parts so well, that none recognised us as Christians. Having our quarters in the mosque, it was very annoying for us to see the musselmans come five times in twenty four hours, to offer up their prayers. They thought it strange that we, as pilgrims and their guests, did not join in their devotions. It is true, we could easily have done so, but knowing how to excuse ourselves, we did not like to push our dissimulation any further. We had only to whisper into the ear of one of them that we were unclean'.⁵³

From Multan, Honigberger and his servant rode on horseback to Lahore, reaching there within two months of leaving Karachi. Ranjit Singh and his army he discovered were out on manoeuvres but they returned soon afterwards. Under the impression that approval had been obtained from the Maharaja, Dr. Honigberger left with Raja Suchet Singh for Jammu and when he returned four months later, he paid the penalty imposed by Ranjit Singh for this slight. Honigberger fumed 'he detained me for nine months without giving me my dismissal, or appointing me to any office.'⁵⁴

Whiling away his time by attending assorted patients, including, successfully, Achilles, the son of General Allard (No. 30) and, unsuccessfully, one of the dray horses brought by Alexander Burnes as a gift for Ranjit Singh from the King of England, Honigberger in 1831 encountered both Burnes and Jacquemont. The former makes no mention of Dr Honigberger in his memoir, but the latter noticed him and spoke of him as 'a Transylvanian doctor who for the last 17 years has been wandering about Asia, seeking his fortune; he talks shortly of retiring to his own country by a route which he would have no chance of finding if he had not used it before; but I fear this is because he has given up all hope of ever finding it. His name is Martin Honigberger, and he speaks Italian, Turkish and Persian fluently, while his written Latin, which I have seen, is not bad. He has always travelled in a very humble way and this is why he is able to speak so many languages well. He is very devoted to his profession and it is the chief object of his life. One would call him a good surgeon and he appears to me to be well versed in Oriental Materia Medica⁵⁵ as well as our own. He is so familiar with the languages and customs of the East that he came by land from the mouth of the

⁵³ Honigberger (1852), 43-44.

⁵⁴ Honigberger (1852), 45.

⁵⁵ A compilation of which was published in Honigberger (1852), Part II.

Indus to Lahore and stayed a fortnight in that city without anyone suspecting that he was a European.⁵⁶

Of Honigberger's official duties and status at Ranjit Singh's Court, Jacquemont confides: 'The Rajah sometimes makes him compound wine or spirits and some drugs which he pretends to take, but pays him very badly. In the eyes of the natives he did not appear to be considered on an equality with the Europeans, while, on the other hand, Allard and Ventura are given first place in their estimation.'⁵⁷ Honigberger, not surprisingly, had a different, more cordial view of the relationship between the Sikh Maharaja and himself. 'Runjeet Singh reposed much confidence in me,' he asserted 'and insisted on my accepting the command of an artillery department, or the office of a Governor of a province, like the Generals Ventura, Avitabile and Dr. Allen'. Having waited so long for an appointment one would have expected Honigberger to have acted differently than he did, but 'this, however, I refused, deeming that I had not sufficient abilities to execute such an office properly; but upon his giving me the choice, I accepted the management of a gun powder manufactory, and also a gun stock establishment.'⁵⁸

Notwithstanding the 'very lucrative' duties which tempted him to stay, Honigberger 'affected with nostalgia' decided to return home travelling outwards via Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan.

As restless outside the Punjab as he was when within it, Honigberger needed only to be told by someone 'who had met General Ventura, that the Maharajah had ordered the general to make enquiries' about him for the Doctor to leave yet another lucrative practice, this time in Constantinople, and to return to the Punjab. Travelling through Pali, Ajmer and Ludhiana, he reached Lahore in the spring of 1839.⁵⁹

By the summer, Ranjit Singh was seriously ill. Dr Honigberger as a last resort was approached by Fakir Azizuddin and asked to prepare a cure. The potion

⁵⁶ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 33-34.

⁵⁷ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 34.

⁵⁸ Honigberger (1852), 56. Gardner (1898), 202, remarked upon the ludicrous paradox: 'Honigberger, who was a doctor and nothing but a doctor, was compelled to superintend a gun-powder manufactory'.

⁵⁹ As on the second journey to the Punjab, Honigberger did not pass through Sind, the reference to Honigberger being stoned by the 'Nazims of Sindh, out of short-sightedness and foolishness' in Suri (1961), 561, is not clear.

seems to have been effective, for by the third day Ranjit Singh was in 'such a merry humour' that he publicly rewarded Honigberger with gold bracelets and gifts of shawls. The local physicians were less enthusiastic. Honigberger's professional opinions of them were like his prescriptions, concentrated and potent. Fakir Azizuddin was just 'a barber, with a few boxes of ointment'; the rest 'carried large books, to cover their want of real learning'.⁶⁰ One can understand the exasperation expressed in his outburst against them at not being allowed to continue his treatment of the Maharaja. 'They would have preferred seeing the king die, rather than acknowledge me, an European, as his saviour.'⁶¹ In truth nothing, not even Honigberger's skill, could have saved Ranjit Singh from the ravages to which he had subjected his own body over the years. Honigberger witnessed the cremation of Ranjit Singh, and, probably with more legitimacy than Colonel Gardner could claim, managed to be present at almost every tragedy thereafter.

Immediately after the accident to Nau Nehal Singh, to quote one instance, Honigberger was summoned to the Hazuri Bagh by Raja Dhian Singh, ostensibly to examine the fatally injured prince. The ensuing dialogue recorded by Honigberger in its flippancy mocks the serious import of the conspiracy in which Raja Dhian Singh was engaged. 'The prince was on his bed, his head most awfully crushed, and his state was such that no hope of his recovery existed. With that conviction I left the tent, and whispered to the minister, in so low a tone that no one else could hear it, "Medical art can do nothing to relieve the unfortunate prince"; upon which, the minister requested me to wait there while he re-entered the tent, and, after a short stay therein, he came out, addressing me loud enough to be heard by all the assembly, who listened attentively, asking "whether they might give some soup to the Koonwar Saheb (royal prince), he wishing to have some". Whereupon I answered, "Of course; he is in need only of parsley"; —a proverb applied to those dangerously ill, and not expected to live.'⁶² Again, at the massacre in Shah Bilawal garden where Maharaja Sher Singh was murdered, Dr Honigberger found himself 'by accident not farther than ten steps from the place where the horrid crime was committed.'⁶³ A more pleasant occasion he preferred to recall was the visit of the painter August

⁶⁰ Honigberger (1852), 95.

⁶¹ Honigberger (1852), 94.

⁶² Honigberger (1852), 103.

⁶³ Honigberger (1852), 107.

Schoefft. Another visitor the Russian prince Alexis Soltykoff, who met Honigberger in March, 1842, wrote of him as 'a German doctor at Sher Singh's court, with the largest beard you ever saw, and gold satin uniform trimmed with silver. His name is Honigberger, and he has just sold me a Lahore violin and a panorama of Lahore done by a local artist.'⁶⁴

In company with the other European officers and mercenaries, Dr Honigberger was dismissed in 1844 by Pandit Jalla, Hira Singh's confidant, and then re-instated by his successor Jawahir Singh in the same year. After the battle of Sobraon in February, 1846, Honigberger attached himself to Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu, and through him gained access to the British, who appointed him doctor in charge of the public hospital which replaced the *Dar-el-Shefas*, managed at the expense of the Darbar by the Fakir brothers, Azizuddin and Nuruddin. On 11 March 1846, James Coley, the Chaplain who accompanied the Governor-General, Sir Henry Hardinge, to Lahore for the signing of the Treaty of Lahore, was invited by Dr. Honigberger 'to breakfast' with him. Coley's notes from his journal for that day describe Honigberger as 'a German surgeon, who has been residing in Lahore for many years as a manufacturer of gun-powder for Seekh guns and also of medicine for Seekh stomachs. As things have turned out, he has put more to death by the former trade, than he has saved alive by the latter. The gunpowder trade is now exploded, and my friend must complete his fortune by powder from the doctor's shop.'⁶⁵ To Coley the irony of the situation was irresistible. Honigberger, on this occasion, requested Coley to baptise his children which he did, in the presence of Colonel Mouton (No. 26).

After the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, Honigberger, like Maharaja Dalip Singh, was granted a pension. The only difference 'between the two pensions being, that I am allowed to expend mine wherever I please' Dr Honigberger felt he had to point out.⁶⁶

The Punjab had by mid-century lost its magical insularity for the European adventurers. It was time to move on, or to retire. Honigberger paid an abortive visit to Maharaja Gulab Singh in his recently-acquired kingdom of Kashmir, and then, after stopping at Mussoorie to visit the two daughters by his native wife⁶⁷ (whom he never once mentions in his otherwise detailed memoirs), he returned to Europe and to a fireside of flickering reminiscences.

⁶⁴ Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 106.

⁶⁶ Honigberger (1852), 126. ⁶⁵ Coley (1856), 99-100.

⁶⁷ Grey (1929), 239, describes her as 'a Kashmiri' but does not disclose his source.

26 *F. H. Mouton (1804-1876)*

Francis Henri Mouton was thirty-four years old when he applied to General Ventura (No. 32) in 1838 and was selected to join Ranjit Singh's cavalry. He travelled from Alexandria to Bombay with his wife and accompanied by General Ventura, a shawl merchant and Dr Honigberger. Ventura preceded the party to Lahore, and left Dr Honigberger to escort the rest, as he alone among the travellers could speak the language.

Mouton's initial tenure of service was for three years, and this was afterwards extended. He escaped being murdered by mutinying Sikh troops, owing his life to the presence of mind of his wife.⁶⁸ He served in Mandi and Kulu, and in 1844 he returned for a while to France but made his way back to Lahore to fight for the Sikhs at Ferozeshah in December 1845, and Sohraon in February 1846. He was deported by the British in July 1846, but irrepressible by temperament, he soon obtained a legitimate commission in the French army with the rank of Colonel. Mouton was decorated with the Legion of Honour in 1858, and after serving in the Crimea, was retired at the age of sixty-one. He died eleven years later in November 1876 in sunny Algiers.

27 *De la Roche (?-1842)*

Considered by some to be Mauritian by birth but more reliably British,⁶⁹ De la Roche joined the Khalsa service in May, 1838.⁷⁰ Later that year, he was performing civil duties in demarcating land boundaries between Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia and Misr Rup Lal.⁷¹ When Schoefft met De la Roche in 1841, he was the commander of a cavalry regiment. He died in December the following year while returning home drunk. His Muslim wife Fateh Bukhsh had him buried quietly.⁷²

⁶⁸ Gardner (1898), 350; and Grey (1929), 337-339.

⁶⁹ Grey (1929), 342-343. Grey notes that 'according to the Ms. records, De la Roche, before joining the Khalsa service, was a clerk in the British Customs Office at Panipat.' Yet, Suri (1961), 572, records that in December 1838, when Ranjit Singh questioned De la Roche on British infantry methods, the latter replied that 'he had never seen the parade by the English'.

⁷⁰ Suri (1961), 438.

⁷¹ Suri (1961), 512.

⁷² Grey (1929), 343.

28 *De la Font*

De la Font, 'the expert in Law and training' as the Court chronicle described him,⁷³ by-passed British attempts to prevent his prospective employment by Ranjit Singh and entered the Punjab via Bahawalpur. In May 1839, he was nominated as a commanding officer of the army by Ranjit Singh.⁷⁴ He was posted to join General Ventura in Peshawar, and later was in attendance upon Colonel Wade after Ranjit Singh's death. After a trip to France in September 1843, De la Font applied for reinstatement on his re-appearance in Lahore in the following year. He chose the wrong time, for 1844 was a bad year for mercenaries in the Punjab. De la Font took the hint and went back to France.

29 *Fakir Chiraghuddin* (?-1851)

Fakir Chiraghuddin was the only son of Azizuddin (No. 14) to leave issue, and died in 1851, six years after his father.

The inclusion of Fakir Chiraghuddin by Schoefft is traceable to an incident related by Honigberger and which must have occurred while Schoefft was still at Lahore as guest of the doctor. Honigberger recounted how a fakir, who had claimed immunity from the bite of a viper before Maharaja Sher Singh, succumbed to the venom and was taken to the doctor's house. He 'caused him to be taken into a neighbouring stable, belonging to the faqueer Chirakooddeen, who went immediately to see the patient, as he was then vomiting blood. Chirakooddeen was of opinion that he could never recover, and the injured faqueer being a Brahmin, he wished me to send him to a termsale (an Indian temple), in order to avoid the unpleasant consequences which might attend his death'. At this advice, even the fakir became apprehensive. Honigberger continued, 'But, on mentioning this intention to the patient, he preferred being conveyed to a friend of his'.⁷⁵ Another reason for Schoefft's association with Chiraghuddin may have been the pleasant recollection of the use of the latter's famed spring-bath which provided ice-cold water, habitually used by the European officers on their way back from the heat of the Darbar.⁷⁶

⁷³ Suri (1961), 658.

⁷⁴ Suri (1961), 660.

⁷⁵ Honigberger (1852), I, 136-137.

⁷⁶ Grey (1929), 361.

GROUP IV *Colour Plate XVI*

30 J. F. Allard (1785-1839)

Born on 8 March 1785, at St Tropez, France, Jean François Allard joined the French army at the age of eighteen and saw service initially in Italy, Naples and Spain. Seconded to Marshal Brune under Napoleon Bonaparte, Allard's loyalty for the ex-Emperor, even after the battle of Waterloo in 1815, was the direct cause of his departure from France. Allard is known to have been employed in the Egyptian army and subsequently to have moved to Teheran⁷⁷ where, while he was trying to obtain a commission under Shah Abbas, General Ventura (No. 32) convinced him that they both would benefit by moving to the Sikh Court at Lahore.

Allard, accompanied by Ventura, arrived in Lahore on 23 March, 1822. Ranjit Singh was already aware of their progress and without delay invited the two visitors to his palace. After a prologue of courtesies, the inquisitive Maharaja asked them if it was their pleasure to stay with him. They answered that they were not desirous for service; they wished to pass the hot season in Lahore.⁷⁸

The implausibility of the excuse was patent. Ranjit Singh wanted to satisfy himself, however, that they were not Englishmen or spies planted by his neighbours. With an almost childish scheme using forged documents and purported agents, he set about testing their credentials. Jacquemont, a Frenchman also, wrote an account based clearly on his countryman's own recollection of the comic situation that ensued.

Ranjit, when these officers offered him their services, received them with great distinction; but his suspicion of them was as he believed them to be Russian or British. Mr. Moorcroft was then in Kashmir, having arrived from Ladakh, and the Rajah had intercepted a letter written by him to the prince of Little Tibet, in which he gave himself a sort of political character. Ranjit had a letter in English written by a babu from Calcutta whom he had in his service, purporting to be addressed to these gentlemen by Mr. Moorcroft, and with his signature forged, in which Moorcroft was made to say that he had waited for them for some time and that if they wished to join him in Kashmir they would find him ready to carry out their schemes. M. Allard made out the sense of this letter with great difficulty, for he understands only a few words of English.

⁷⁷ Hugel (1845), 355.

⁷⁸ Grey (1929), 96.

However, he seized the bearer and, under the threat of a thrashing, made him confess privately that he was one of Ranjit's own servants. These gentlemen, however, came to Lahore bringing the poor fellow as a prisoner, showed the alleged letter of Mr. Moorcroft to Ranjit Singh and said they proposed to hang the so-called messenger. Ranjit affected to be very surprised at their anger, told them to let the man go and forget all about the matter. 'In this country,' said he without further explanation, 'all this is quite natural. I do not take any notice of such things. Let the man go.' Allard and Ventura were incredulous and insisted on the man being punished, and Ranjit had again to order them to pardon him.⁷⁹

Out-witted for once by the *feranghees*, Ranjit employed them both, Ventura being given responsibility for the infantry and Allard for the cavalry.

Ranjit Singh's relations with his European soldiers, like every other trait in his complex character, were fundamentally ambivalent. Suspicious of them at all times he would tirelessly prise opinions about them from other visiting Europeans. As late as June 1838, he is recorded as soliciting the views on them of his guest, W. H. McNaughten, and again a month later on 8 July 1838, he cornered three of McNaughten's officers and challenged them: 'I have got firm agreements supported by various kinds of oath written out by the Sahibs, who are attached to my court since long or have now come to seek service. They have declared solemnly that they would go to war and battle against every tribe and nation, according to my order, and would not show any kind of procrastination or negligence in kindling up the fires of fighting and war. Give me a correct and detailed account of the Sahibs and say whether they would stick to war and fighting or they would avoid to go to the field of battle if, according to the vicissitudes of time and the opportunities of the age, the Sarkar *Khalsaji* be driven to fight against the Sahibs (English)'.⁸⁰

The English officers, asserting that it was 'essential to speak the truth before the kings', proceeded to tell Ranjit Singh what he did and at the same time did not want to hear. They told him frankly: 'No confidence and trust should be placed in the written agreements of those people, because only the pursuit of their own selfish and personal advantages and benefits always remained marked on the page of their conscience'.

Ranjit Singh defended his officers vigorously: 'Since a very long time Allard,

⁷⁹ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 30-31.

⁸⁰ Suri (1961), 490-491.

Ventura, Court, Avitabile and certain other glorious Sahibs have entered into a firm agreement with me and have been taking thousands of rupees from me every month, and so I am sure that they would certainly engage themselves in rendering suitable services at the time of need'. The less glorious Sahibs remained obdurate in their scepticism. 'Any kind of hope', they told the Maharaja, 'of sincere service from this sect of people was futile. They should not be trusted to the extent of a single hair'. Ranjit Singh argued for the Europeans in his service as vehemently as did the three Englishmen against them. Without relenting, Ranjit Singh returned to the Fort and once inside, confided privately to Raja Dhian Singh with 'a great deal of sorrow and disappointment . . . that all the three Sahibs had expressed the truth'.⁸¹

Ranjit Singh's attitude towards Allard remained cordial throughout their association. Impressed from the outset by Allard's ingenuity in crossing the Indus at Attock in 1823 with the loss of only three men, while over 1200 had been swept away moments earlier as a result of the Maharaja's curt but careless command,⁸² Ranjit Singh extended to Allard every courtesy in public, even to the extent (if Jacquemont is to be believed) of rising to his feet whenever Allard presented himself in the Darbar.⁸³ Courtesies cost Ranjit Singh nothing. Money he could not bring himself to part with, whether for overdue salaries or for adequate equipment for Allard's cavalry. Given command in 1822 of two regiments, one of dragoons and the other of lancers, Allard was kept at this level of responsibility for nearly seven years until in 1829, he was made responsible for 'one regiment of cavalry, one of lancers, and two of dragoons. He had also 2000 artillery men in training, manning some 200 guns of which most were horse artillery'.⁸⁴

Both Jacquemont and Burnes, who visited and stayed with Allard in 1831, testified to his hospitality and 'engaging and gentleman-like'⁸⁵ manners. Allard was at the time forty-six years old and complained to Jacquemont 'of his age and the break-up of his health',⁸⁶ his spirit though remained undaunted and

⁸¹ Suri (1961), 491.

⁸² The incident is described in Masson (1842), I, 140.

⁸³ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 31.

⁸⁴ Grey (1929), 82 from Masson (1842), I, 432.

⁸⁵ Burnes (1834), III, 148.

⁸⁶ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 56.

patriotic. Baron Hugel, visiting Allard's house five years later in 1836, noticed that 'the eagle and Napoleon's flag are displayed on every wall'.⁸⁷ In October 1831, Allard was present at the famous meeting between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentinck, then Governor-General of India, at Rupar. His cavalry came in for some arbitrary criticism as being inferior to that of the British, a fact everyone agreed as being more attributable to Ranjit Singh's parsimony than to any lack of skill on Allard's part.

Worn out and tired, Allard applied for leave to return to France. Ranjit Singh tried to settle his salary arrears in *pashmina* shawls, but Allard was adamant. He needed the money. His English bankers had just failed him; his Sikh banker and employer was threatening to do the same. Eventually, permission was granted and Allard with his family left for France through British-held territory on 15 June 1834.

From France, Allard continued to correspond with Ranjit Singh. The contents of one of his letters, received at the Sikh Court in May 1836, explains the consummate understanding of Ranjit Singh's mind he had acquired over the years.

A letter from Allard Sahib intimated his interview with the King, his talks about the courage, generosity and wisdom, of the decoration and equipment of the troops and other accoutrements, prosperity of the country and the contentment of the people, and talked about his own old age and weakness, the agreeability of the climate of his native country, plenty of food in his own house, the ever-increasing kindness and favour of his King, the blessing of friendship and comradeship there and the daily enjoyment of comfort and ease and said that yet he could not forget the favours of the Maharaja. On hearing the great talk of his goodness and liberality, many of his country-men were eager to present themselves to him; but he was not bringing any one along with him without the order of the Maharaja. He further added that he was hanging the letter from the Maharaja around his neck like a talisman. He said that one day the King enquired from him about it and he replied that it was a letter from the Maharaja. The King and his associates examined it and asked why the seal was so small and he replied that the eye is the smallest of all the limbs and yet sees the whole of the world, nay the whole world can be surveyed

⁸⁷ Hugel (1845), 311. The display of the flag was noticed by Jacquemont as well. See Jacquemont (1834), I, 401.

by it. The Maharaja felt greatly pleased on hearing the content of this letter.⁸⁸

Allard returned alone to the Punjab, stopping at Calcutta in December 1836 to attend a ball given by Lord Auckland and his sisters Emily and Fanny Eden at Government House. Allard's distinctive looks did not escape Miss Emily's attention. She wrote of him on 5 December to a friend: 'Allard wears an immensely long beard that he is always stroking and making much of; and I was dead absent all the time he was there because his *wings* are beautiful white hair, and his moustachios and the middle of his beard quite black. He looks like a piebald horse'.⁸⁹ Miss Eden was not alone in noticing Allard's impressive beard. It had been regarded by Jacquemont earlier as perhaps one of the factors for the unusual respect accorded to him by the Sikhs.⁹⁰

Re-appearing at Ranjit Singh's court with French cuirasses, pistols, carbines, arms and a suit of armour appropriated by Raja Dhian Singh⁹¹ the cordiality of Allard's reception was assured. The letter of fraternal greetings from King Louis Philippe addressed to Ranjit Singh investing Allard with an ambiguously defined ambassadorial status was equally welcome but less effective, for the British disapproved strongly of such an arrangement being concluded without their consent.

On 31 January 1839, General Allard was dead.⁹² His body was brought to Lahore and laid in state in his house. Lieutenant Barr viewed the body and also remembered in his memoir a portrait of Allard which hung in the dining room of Ventura's house. Barr described it as one 'which bespeaks him to have been a handsome and benevolent man, possessing much firmness and decision of character, tempered with mildness. He wore, at the time it was taken, a uniform

⁸⁸ Suri (1961), 291.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Gardner (1898), 315.

⁹⁰ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 34.

⁹¹ See Solykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 102.

⁹² Barr was present in February 1839 when the arrangements were made for Allard's interment next to his daughter Charlotte in the grounds of his country house near Anarkali. 'Entering the interior, we found some labourers busy disinterring a coffin, as it is resolved the corpse of the general shall be buried in the centre of the pile, and that of his daughter removed to one side; but whilst observing their work, a second coffin was discovered about a foot and half longer than the first, and which none present knew anything of. This will therefore be placed on the other side, as there is no doubt it contains another of the general's family.' Barr (1844), 84.

similar to that of our horse-artillery, and was decorated with two orders; one, the "Legion of Honour," the other, the "Bright Star of the Punjab" lately instituted by Runjeet Singh'.⁹³

When Schoefft visited Lahore in 1841, Allard had been dead for almost two years. Yet the likeness and the pose of the figure of Allard was used by Schoefft as immediately recognisable from another portrait of the French General published in Colonel Gardner's memoirs.⁹⁴ It is certain that the portrait noticed by Barr was still hanging in Ventura's house when it was seen by Schoefft. Barr also recorded that 'another picture of the General and his family, taken by a French artist when he returned home some three or four years ago, was pointed out to us, and though not finished, being merely the design from which a larger drawing was made, the group is well arranged, and the pretty faces of his Cashmerian wife and his children who were dressed in the costume of their mother's country, drew forth the admiration of us all'.⁹⁵

The two children and his Kashmiri wife, along with the little boy whom Allard had rescued and adopted, and who carried 'his messages to the zenana'⁹⁶ remained in France. These portraits are still in the possession of the last surviving female descendants of General Allard in St Tropez, France.⁹⁷

31 P. B. Avitabile (1791-1850)

Paolo di Bartolomeo Avitabile was born on 25 October 1791 at Agerola near Naples. He joined the army while still in his teens and after a chequered career, blighted by the inability of his immediate superiors to recognise his special talents, he chose to emigrate westwards. Shipwrecked off Marseilles, he turned *volte face* and set his sights for service in the East. Whether he achieved in Persia, where he served before moving to India, the various distinctions he claimed in later years cannot be confirmed but the rewards were neither remunerative enough nor frequent enough to hold Avitabile. Encouraged by Ventura (No. 32), Avitabile

⁹³ Barr (1844), 78.

⁹⁴ Gardner (1898), opp. 296.

⁹⁵ Barr (1844), 78-79.

⁹⁶ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 34.

⁹⁷ I am indebted to Mr Jean Marie Lafont, Lecturer in French, University of the Punjab, for providing this information.

and Court (No. 40) moved to the Punjab in 1827 and obtained employment with Ranjit Singh. Unlike his *feranghee* colleagues, Avitabile displayed a marked ability for civil administration and was accordingly appointed Governor of Wazirabad in December 1829.

Avitabile's concept of administration was not particularly enlightened, even for his times, and he remained unencumbered by the complexities a surfeit of legal opinions can spawn. He simplified his code by making hanging the punishment for every crime. An incident recounted by Baron Hugel testified to this macabre penchant: 'While Avitabile was at Wazirabad not long ago, six robbers were taken, professors of the Sikh religion, to whom Ranjit Singh thought himself bound to show forbearance. It was an embarrassing circumstance, this being the second apprehension of the thieves. They were sent to Avitabile, with a command that they should not be allowed to escape again, and the same hour they were hanged. The Maha Raja sent for Avitabile in high wrath; all his friends trembled for him, and when he appeared before Ranjit, he asked how he had dared to hang six Sikhs, who had been given into his safe keeping. Avitabile answered, that he thought it the surest means of preventing their escape and obeying the Maha Raja's command.'⁹⁸

Dr Honigberger's professional diagnosis of his fellow mercenary re-inforced the opinion held privately by many others that Avitabile suffered from a disease brought on by 'his immoderate indulgence in champagne, which affected his brain.'⁹⁹ The physical distortions on Avitabile's face caused by a contraction of his facial muscles and the 'long, crooked nose' remarked upon by Honigberger have been accurately captured by Schoefft in his portrait.

Although expressing great unwillingness at being sent to govern Peshawar in 1835, Avitabile saw little need once there for a change in his methods. His own account of the first months of his stay is brutally terse. 'When I marched into Peshawar I sent on in advance a number of wooden posts, which my men erected around the walls of the city. The men scoffed at them, and laughed at the madness of the Feringhi, and louder still when my men came in and laid coils of rope at the foot of the posts. Guns and swords, said they, were the arms to rule the city, and not sticks and ropes. However, when my preparations were completed, they found one fine morning dangling from these posts, fifty of the worst characters in Peshawar, and I repeated the exhibition every day till I had made a scarcity of

⁹⁸ Hugel (1845), 317.

⁹⁹ Honigberger (1852), 53.

brigands and murderers. Then I had to deal with the liars and tale-bearers. My method with them was to cut out their tongues . . . And then a surgeon appeared and professed to be able to restore their speech. I sent for him, and cut out his tongue also. After that there was peace . . .'¹⁰⁰

While maintaining a tight control on the city and its diminishing inhabitants, Avitabile wrote to Ranjit Singh to tell him 'that he had no ability or capacity for *Kardarship* and humbly submitted that he should either be given a military command or recalled to the court.'¹⁰¹ To underline his message, he sketched a dog near the seal on the letter, leaving it to his addressee to determine exactly whom the dog was intended to represent. Four months later, in June 1838, Ranjit Singh was receiving confidential reports of embezzlement by Avitabile from the revenues of Peshawar.

After Ranjit Singh's death, Avitabile's ability to subjugate a difficult out-post was well recognised by everyone at the centre of Sikh politics in Lahore. He remained at his post, but worked increasingly to preserve the interests of the British against the rapacity of their Sikh allies rather than against their common adversary, the Afghans.

Avitabile was eventually relieved in April 1843 and, after selling everything he could realise, he left for Simla immediately after Maharaja Sher Singh's murder. A rebuff from senior Government officials in Simla did little to dampen the enthusiasm with which the 'dignified and courtly old man'—as one Calcutta newspaper described the tyrant of Peshawar—was greeted by the curious ladies of Calcutta.

He returned to Naples, where he was fêted by the King, he moved on to Paris to be received in audience by King Louis Philippe; then he crossed the Channel for a banquet given in his honour in London by the grateful East India Company, and was granted a private interview with the Duke of Wellington 'to whom he confided much, till then unknown, information regarding Afghan affairs'.¹⁰²

Avitabile retired to Agerola near Naples, his birthplace, and was soon married to a young niece by his scheming relatives, keen on sharing his spoils. Before long, however, the bride and her lawyer paramour were able to accomplish a feat which the fierce Kurds in Persia, the Sikhs in Wazirabad, and

¹⁰⁰ Grey (1929), 131, translated from Cotton, J. J. *Il Generale Avitabile* (Napoli, 1857).

¹⁰¹ Suri (1961), 409.

¹⁰² Grey (1929), 146–147.

the Peshawari Pathans had all admitted was impossible. The ageing General was disposed of silently, it was rumoured, from the combined effects of a poisoned meal and asphyxiation in a gas-filled room.¹⁰³ He died in March 1850, aged fifty-nine.

32 *J. B. Ventura* (?-1858)

An Italian by birth, Jean Baptiste Ventura all but adopted French nationality. He was conscripted into the Italian contingent raised to assist Napoleon; he served with the French forces in Russia in 1812 and later fought in the decisive Battle of Waterloo. Like his companion Allard (No. 30), Ventura gravitated eastwards to India and entered Ranjit Singh's service in 1822. He was given command of the Sikh infantry and earned the Maharaja's admiration soon afterwards by his valiant contribution to the Sikh success at the battle of Nowshera in March 1823.

Despatched by the Maharaja on another campaign two years later, Ventura encountered a hostile reaction from the Sikh Sardars who were expected to serve under him. Ranjit Singh intervened personally and enforced his preference for the 'outsiders'. Ventura repaid this act of affirmation and faith by serving Ranjit Singh with more honesty and loyalty than any of the other European mercenaries in his employ. The relationship between Ventura and his employer was summed up by Baron Hugel as follows:

The General has been of great service to the Maha Raja, both in the field and in the training of his forces, but he is blamed for not being sufficiently pliant and refined for a court. None but minions have any influence over Ranjit Singh, and it is to Ventura's honour that he is not one of these. Here and in India he is acknowledged to be a man of high honour, and during a journey he took not long since in Hindustan, the English Generals and other officers, testified their respect to him most cordially. He has been appointed by the Maha Raja, Kazi and Governor of Lahore, which gives him the third place at his court. He has to attend the Maha Raja soon after sunrise every morning, and during the day all sorts of grievances are brought before him.¹⁰⁴

Ranjit Singh gave official recognition to his special consideration for Ventura

¹⁰³ Honigberger (1852), 53, however, records that 'he died of apoplexy'.

¹⁰⁴ Hugel (1845), 316-317.

by investing him with the title 'Faithful and Devoted' and had the credential proclaimed 'all over his dominions.'¹⁰⁵

Ventura married the daughter of a Frenchman residing at Ludhiana and, although he brought her back for a sumptuous official wedding ceremony at Lahore and installed her in his house next to Anarkali's tomb, his interest in her remained minimal throughout his life. He continued to maintain a harem, which by 1839 consisted of 'about forty or fifty female slaves',¹⁰⁶ but gave his heart to his only daughter Claude Victoria. He was obliged to leave the child behind as a hostage when he returned to Europe for a holiday in 1838.

Ventura, on hearing of Ranjit Singh's illness, hurried back to Lahore. Posted to Peshawar, he was recalled to Lahore in 1839, on Ranjit Singh's death. Ventura knew better than to wait for the inevitable debacle that confronted the Sikh Khalsa. He resigned and returned to France, leaving behind such impedimenta as his wife and female slaves, and taking his portable assets with him—his daughter, money from the sale of his possessions and the title 'Count of Mandi' gained after his campaign in that Hill state in 1841.

Ventura retired in comfort, one of the few of Ranjit Singh's mercenaries to do so, and died in France on 3 April 1858.

33 *Foulkes* (?-1841)

Although Foulkes joined the Khalsa in February, 1836, there is a reference to him being with General Ventura in Lahore five months earlier. The relevant entry in October 1835 states that a book in English on the training and movements of cavalry and infantry platoons was presented to Ranjit Singh by Captain Wade. The Maharaja was impatient to have it translated. Ventura opined that no one was proficient enough in the English language to accomplish such a technical task. Bhai Ram Singh's choice, Fakir Azizuddin, was too busy and so the responsibility shifted to Sohan Lal Suri, the court chronicler, who promptly invoked the assistance of General Ventura and his English subordinate, Foulkes. Ventura, with his experience of the Maharaja's method of working, knew exactly when to strike a bargain. He told Suri that 'he must first arrange for the grant of maintenance to Fox Sahib and afterwards, through the help of the said Sahib, the book would be translated.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Suri (1961), 318.

¹⁰⁶ Barr (1844), 78.

¹⁰⁷ Suri (1961), 254.

Obviously, the ruse worked. By February 1836, Foulkes was employed but was not entirely obedient to his benefactor. A dispute between Ventura and Foulkes was reported to Ranjit Singh: 'The Maharaja inquired about the matter from Ventura Sahib, who said, "we were sitting at the table together. I had a lancet in my hand according to the custom of the Sahibs. As ill luck would have it, it hurt the finger of Fox Sahib very seriously and the blood began to flow. He began to raise cries and made a lot of fuss about it". I said to him "It is no more than the cut of a table knife and you are altogether changed by its effect! How would you be able to carry on the profession of a soldier?" He, in reply, at once drew out a pistol and challenged him to a fight'.¹⁰⁸

Foulkes's pluck remained unshaken, and it was an ironical tragedy that caused this Englishman, whose loyalty Ranjit Singh constantly suspected on no other grounds than that he was English, should have lost his life in Mandi in 1841 whilst trying to control mutinying Sikh troops. Foulkes was thrown still alive, on to a hastily prepared funeral pyre, 'universally regretted by all who had ever known him'.¹⁰⁹

His friend Vigne left a touching memorial in the following words: 'I saw a good deal of him at different times whilst I was travelling on the west of the Sutlej, and had often pitied him under circumstances of great irritation, anxiety and suspense, occasioned by that tyrannical and insulting delay of decision for which Runjit was generally remarkable, when any one, whom he could bully a little with impunity, came to him for the purpose of taking service. I am happy to be thus able, from my own knowledge, to make public and honourable mention of a young Englishman, who sought his fortune in these countries, whose conduct and feeling seem to me to be always that of an officer and gentleman, and invariably that of a man who was too self-respecting to be servile, and too high-minded for intrigue'.¹¹⁰

34 *H. Steinbach*

A Prussian by origin, Henry Steinbach joined the service of Ranjit Singh in 1836. In July 1838, upon the death of Rani Raj Kaur (Kharak Singh's mother), Steinbach was sent by Ranjit Singh to Sheikhpura on an unseemly mission —

¹⁰⁸ Suri (1961), 274–275.

¹⁰⁹ Steinbach (1846), 31.

¹¹⁰ Vigne (1842), I, 130–131.

to sequester the estates of the deceased rani.¹¹¹ Kharak Singh protested to his father but to no avail. Five days later, Ranjit Singh 'took the village of Khanpur from the territory of *Mai Sahiba* (Nakain) and very kindly granted it to Steinbach in lieu of his salary'.¹¹² On Ranjit Singh's death he watched the suttee ceremonies with Dr Honigberger.¹¹³ Later, in 1841, Steinbach was despatched by his irate Kashmiri battalion to obtain sanction for their demands from Maharaja Sher Singh, threatening him if he should fail with a particularly humiliating defilement. He remained on duty in Peshawar for a while and then returned to Lahore in 1843, before leaving for Europe. He was accompanied by Honigberger's younger brother.¹¹⁴

When he returned to the Punjab, he sought employment with Maharaja Gulab Singh of Kashmir but remained only a short time in his service. His supersession by an Indian was too great an insult to the pride of one who was not to be bought even by the Sikhs and, so stung by the Governor-General's observation 'that the Indian was the better man of the two',¹¹⁵ Steinbach returned to Europe and was still there in 1852, when his companion Honigberger published his memoirs.

35 *H. C. Van Cortlandt (c. 1814–1888)*

Enrolled at the age of eighteen years immediately after he returned to India from his education in England, Henry Charles Van Cortlandt joined Ranjit Singh's service in 1832. He was given charge of one Muslim battalion, and later on of two. Described by Henry Lawrence as 'weak and submissive (and) not likely to create a disturbance, but still less likely to quell one',¹¹⁶ Van Cortlandt maintained himself with a commendable bravery—with the British as a political assistant during the first Sikh War and, immediately after, with the Sikhs. In 1844, he was in command of two infantry regiments of ten guns, comprising Sikhs and Hindus. After the war he was promoted from the rank of Colonel to that of General and appointed Governor of Dera Ismail Khan. Back again on

¹¹¹ Suri (1961), 502.

¹¹² Suri (1961), 507.

¹¹³ Honigberger (1852), 97.

¹¹⁴ Honigberger (1852), 171.

¹¹⁵ Grey (1929), 326.

¹¹⁶ Grey (1929), 304.

the side of the British during the siege of Multan, he was of help to Herbert Edwardes but was not rewarded according to his expectations. He remained on active service through the Mutiny of 1857, and retired as Commissioner of Multan.¹¹⁷ Henry Van Cortlandt died in London on 15 March 1888.

36 *Sham Singh Attariwala* (?–1846)

One of the most prominent of Sikh generals, Sham Singh was also a model example of the professional soldier. Knowing as he did the political consequences of the Sikh army crossing the Sutlej, when required to defend his own he did so boldly, with dignity and with his life.

Conspicuous, with his flowing white beard,¹¹⁸ Sham Singh ceremoniously donned white garments and rode into the field at Sobraon on 10 February, 1846. Faithful to his vow not to leave the battle field alive, he was found amongst the slain. By the time his body was returned to his home village 'his widow, who knew his resolution not to survive defeat, had already burnt herself with the clothes the Sirdar had worn on his wedding day'.¹¹⁹

37 *Mehan Singh*

Deputed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in January 1832, to receive Alexander Burnes, Commandant Mehan Singh is recorded as being posted two years later to Kashmir at a salary of Rs. 30,000 with 'advice at the time of his departure to keep in view the prosperity of the country and to give encouragement to the people and asked to send valuable *Doshalas* worthy of wearing by the Maharaja'.¹²⁰

From Kashmir, the Commandant's report was less than comforting. He informed Ranjit Singh through an orderly 'that the shawl wool was going from Tibet to Jammu and, on account of the inattention of the Maharaja, Kashmir had become absolutely deserted and its affairs had gone from bad to worse'.¹²¹ Ranjit Singh castigated his Prime Minister, Raja Dhian Singh, publicly in the Darbar and immediately appointed a Mulla Farash and Sukh Lal to investigate

¹¹⁷ Gardner (1898), 339.

¹¹⁸ Noticeable in other portraits of Sham Singh Attariwala. For examples, see Archer (1966), fig. 94.

¹¹⁹ Griffin (1892), 67. Sham Singh's widow was the last *suttee* in the Punjab.

¹²⁰ Suri (1961), 192.

¹²¹ Suri (1961), 213.

the affairs of Kashmir, and sent instructions to Mehan Singh 'to do his utmost to make Kashmir prosperous'. Raja Dhian Singh's revenge against Mehan Singh for his uncomfortable revelation is not recorded.

38 *Fakir Nuruddin (1789-1852)*

Younger brother of Fakir Azizuddin, Fakir Nuruddin served variously as physician to Ranjit Singh, Governor of Lahore, as a witness to the Treaty of Lahore in March 1846, and subsequently as a member of the Regency Council after the deposition of Raja Lal Singh.

Although enjoying 'great respect from the English, for his extended knowledge and eminent merits',¹²² Khalifa (as he was called at court), Nuruddin never managed to win over Dr Martin Honigberger or Jacquemont, both of whom slipped into derision whenever mentioning him or his brothers. Jacquemont, writing while Ranjit Singh was still alive, criticised the 'three Mohammedan brothers, who conceal their wealth under an outward appearance of poverty and seek to atone for their intrusion by the humility of their behaviour. All of them bear the title of Fakir, as do their sons. They know Arabic and have read the medical books written in that language, hence their reputation for deep scientific knowledge'.¹²³

Dr Honigberger was no kinder: 'I gave lessons in pharmacy and chymistry to the fakirs Aziz-oo-Deen and Noor-oo-Deen,' he wrote with condescension, and later: 'There are also the royal magazines, under the care of Noor-oo-Deen, where I prepared different opiates, and many metallic oxydes (*kooshtegee*), to please the fakir and Runjeet Singh, for which they held me in high estimation'.¹²⁴

Fakir Nuruddin¹²⁵ was appointed Governor of Lahore¹²⁶ before 1831 and remained so intermittently during Ranjit Singh's reign. When he called to pay his respects to Allard's body in 1839 as it lay in state, he met Lieutenant William Barr who found him 'a short, elderly and rather plainly-dressed man, with an

¹²² Honigberger (1852), 140.

¹²³ Jacquemont, quoted in Garrett (1935), 50.

¹²⁴ Honigberger (1852), 50.

¹²⁵ For another portrait of Nuruddin, see Archer (1966), fig. 101.

¹²⁶ One of the orders issued by Ranjit Singh to Fakir Nuruddin may still be seen in Lahore Museum.

intelligent and somewhat amiable cast of countenance . . . and the perfect gentleman in his manner'.¹²⁷ He escorted Rani Jindan to Benares where she was exiled in May 1848. He died in 1852, at the age of sixty-three.

39 *Fakir Haridas*

No relative to the Muslim Fakir brothers, the Hindu fakir, Haridas, claimed to be able to survive being buried alive for months. He was ordered from Amritsar by Ranjit Singh to appear before the British Mission on 6 June 1838. His reputation had been confirmed to Osborne by Colonel Ventura who had been present at an earlier demonstration of the fakir's talents. Osborne and his English companions were not satisfied with hearsay. They desired to see the interment for themselves. Just over a fortnight later, on the 26 June, the fakir signified that he was ready in body and spirit, and would be interred at noon that day.

'At the appointed hour', Osborne recorded in his diary, 'we accordingly all assembled, and found a crowd of priests and Gooroos collected at the spot, to witness the interment of the holy man. His courage had much evaporated since the morning, and he commenced the interview by saying that we had promised him no reward. We told him that we feared a man of his sanctity would have been offended at any such offer, but as it was not so, we would agree to give him fifteen hundred rupees if he came out alive at the end of a week, and that we were also empowered to promise him a jaghir of two thousand rupees yearly, on the part of Runjeet Singh.

He then requested to know what precautions we meant to take to prevent his being disturbed, and to keep away all chance of communication from without. We produced two padlocks for his box, and two more for the door of the inner vault, one key of each of which we told him should be given to any one he might appoint to receive it, and the others we should keep ourselves; that all the locks should be sealed with our own seals; that the entrance to the outer room in which the vault was built should be walled up; that sentries from our own troops should be posted night and day round the tower, and that if at the end of the period specified—one week—he was alive to claim them, the money and the villages should both be made over to him. He was evidently frightened, and made objections to arrangements that he himself had proposed the day before, and insisted that he must have a duplicate key to each lock, which he must leave in

¹²⁷ Barr (1844), 75.

charge of his own people; that the seals should be only placed upon a particular part of each lock, which he pointed out, and where they would have been perfectly useless, and also insisted upon no Mussulmen sentries being placed near the spot.

After an hour's wrangle, he professing himself ready to fulfil his engagement on these conditions, and we firm in our resolution not to be humbugged, we rose to go away.¹²⁸

This was too much for the fakir, who displaying instead of the advertised endurance his remarkable powers of instantaneous recovery, exploded 'into the most violent abuse against all Englishmen generally, and ourselves individually'. An argument ensued, with the fakir maintaining that he had been deliberately and maliciously humiliated, and that he felt sure that they knew as well as he did that he would never emerge alive. Osborne was entirely in agreement with the fakir's accusations.

'I told him, in reply, that I was as certain as himself of the latter fact, and that though there were no coroner's inquests in the Punjab, I had still a strong objection to having his death laid at my door; and that, as he himself now allowed the danger of the attempt, I must decline having anything more to do with it'.¹²⁹

Osborne sketched the 'burying faqueer' as he captioned his illustration and brought out in it 'the disagreeable and cunning expression of countenance'¹³⁰ he found so obnoxious.

Both Steinbach¹³¹ and Honigberger¹³² make mention of this illusionist, the latter writer publishing a drawing of the fakir which he obtained from Colonel Gardner.¹³³ Schoefft's study is taken directly from this drawing, and if, as

¹²⁸ Osborne (1840), 170-173.

¹²⁹ Osborne (1840), 175.

¹³⁰ Osborne (1840), 128.

¹³¹ Steinbach (1846), 162-164.

¹³² Honigberger (1852), 126-133.

¹³³ Honigberger (1852), pl. VII. The explanatory note to the plate on page 195 reads 'The lithograph engraving in this, the first volume, are faithful copies of Portraits and Sketches, taken by a native at Lahore—excepting only the likeness of Faqueer Haridas, which I had from Captain Gardner; and though I never saw Haridas, I rely on the resemblance; for, on showing it to several natives, who knew him well, as also to General Ventura and Colonel Sir C. M. Wade, who were present at the restoration of the Faqueer, they recognised the likeness'.

Honigberger stated Schoefft was in St Petersburg when the former's reminiscences were published in 1852, Schoefft must have taken a copy of this drawing with him before he left the Punjab. The fakir Haridas, according to Honigberger, was accused by his colleagues of being 'a *debauchee*' and pre-empting Ranjit Singh's expulsion orders, eloped with a woman to the hills and later died there.

GROUP V *Colour Plates XVII, XIII & X*

40 *C. A. Court (1793-1861)*

A Frenchman by birth, a soldier by profession and a 'gentleman and a savant' by choice, Claude Auguste Court was born at Grasse, in the south of France, on 26 September 1793. He joined the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris in 1812 and was commissioned a year later as a sub-lieutenant. After seeing some active service in Napoleon's forces, he resigned in July 1818 and found employment in Persia. Avitabile was also serving there and so the admission of Court into Ranjit Singh's army through the recommendation of Avitabile did not pose an insuperable difficulty.

Court was presented by Avitabile to the Maharaja, who soon entrusted the artillery to his latest recruit. Court applied himself with creative diligence to the manufacture of guns with the result that on a gun cast in 1830 and christened Lelan he was commemorated in the inscription on it as 'possessing wisdom like Aristotle, the Plato of the age'.¹³⁴

Alexander Burnes, a little later, was more conservative but generous in his assessment of Court: 'M. Court struck me as an acute and well informed person; he is both a geographer and an antiquarian. M. Court, as well as his brother officers, was formerly in the service of one of the Persian Princes, and travelled to India as a native, which gave him an opportunity of acquiring the best information regarding the intervening countries. He showed me the route from Kermenshah, by Herat, Candahar, Ghuzni, and Cabool, to Attok, constructed topographically with great care; and he informed me, at the same time, that he had been less anxious to obtain a complete map of that part of Asia, than to ascertain one good route, with its detours, and the military and statistical resources of the country. The French have much better information of these

¹³⁴ Latif (1892), 387.

countries than ourselves; and M. Court, in explaining his map to me, pointed out the best routes for infantry and cavalry. This gentleman has likewise employed a residence of four years in the Punjab to illustrate its geography; he has encountered jealousy from Runjeet Singh, but still managed to complete a broad belt of survey from Attok to the neighbourhood of our own frontier. I doubt not but the antiquities as well as the geography of the Punjab will be illustrated by this intelligent gentleman; who, to his honour be it said, adds to a zeal in the pursuit, the strongest desire to disseminate his own knowledge and stimulate others.'¹³⁵

Forced after Ranjit Singh's death to side with one of the fragmented factions, Court joined General Ventura and Sher Singh. The prevailing spirit of mutiny was soon to infect Court's troops, with the result that he had to seek the protection of the British at Ferozepur. He returned to Lahore during Sher Singh's lifetime but found the hostility of his former troops unabated. After Sher Singh's assassination he returned to Ferozepur, and by doing so forfeited his jagirs which were confiscated by Pandit Jalla (Raja Hira Singh's confidant) in 1844. Court returned to France with his Kashmiri wife, whom he married in June 1844 according to Roman Catholic rites. He died in his home town of Grasse in 1861.

41 *Meka Singh*

Identified by Schoefft (obviously from personal experience) in his notes to the painting as a 'Major-domo, invariably more drunk than sober.'

42 *Bhai Gurmukh Singh* (?-1843)

Another of Ranjit Singh's Sikh priestly confidants, he performed various secular duties as well, such as arranging 'illuminations and play of fireworks in the most suitable manner' for Lord Auckland and his entourage in December 1838.¹³⁶ He was murdered in 1843 on the orders of Raja Hira Singh for his complicity in the murder of Raja Dhian Singh.

43 *Attar Singh Sindhanwalia* (?-1844)

Attar Singh, the fourth son of Sardar Amir Singh Sindhanwalia, shared with his brothers Lehna Singh (No. 24) and Budh Singh an impetuous courage and an ambitious, abrasive energy. One reads for example in the Court record of an

¹³⁵ Burnes (1834), III, 157-158.

¹³⁶ Suri (1961), 590.

argument between Lehna Singh and Basawa Singh in the hot May of 1831, and of Attar Singh remonstrating with Maharaja Ranjit Singh for siding with Lehna Singh against the third brother. Suri recorded laconically, 'The respectable Sardar requested the Maharaja that he was at that time to be allowed to knock the brains out of the head of Lehna Singh, and to indulge in fighting and bloodshed. The Maharaja remarked humourously and out of kindness that at the time the said Sarkar had gone to make collections from the country of the mountainous regions of Tira and other places under his orders and was busy in rendering suitable services.'¹³⁷

Ranjit Singh diverted Attar Singh's energies by using them in Peshawar in 1837, and if the length of the title bestowed on Attar Singh on his return was any measure of his monarch's appreciation for his services, Ranjit Singh must have been uncontrollably pleased. The title rolled '*Ujal didar, Nirmal budh, Sardar-i-ba-Wakar, Kasir-ul-iktidar, Sarwar-i-garoh-i-namdar, Ali taba, Shuja-ud-Daula Sardar Atar Singh, Sham Sher-i-Jang Bahadur*'.¹³⁸

Attar Singh was to deserve the accolade more fully a year later when he helped to save the Maharaja, by wounding an intoxicated elephant, when he was in danger of being attacked by the maddened beast near Shah Bilawal, Lahore. Ranjit Singh expressed his gratitude in public. Privately, a few days later Attar Singh approached the Maharaja and 'asked for Rs. 25000 by way of a temporary loan'.¹³⁹

After Nau Nehal Singh's death in 1840, Sardar Attar Singh espoused the cause of Rani Chand Kaur against Sher Singh's aspirations to the throne of Lahore. The Sindhanwalia brothers were consistently outmanoeuvred by their Dogra rivals Rajas Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh.

Sher Singh's accession was cause enough for Attar Singh to seek refuge across the Sutlej at Thanesar, under the control of the British. Attar Singh remained outside the inferno at Lahore but could not escape the insatiable Kali-thirst for blood of the Khalsa. Tricked by the youngest, but not the most inexperienced of his Dogra enemies, Raja Hira Singh, Attar Singh returned to Sikh territory to find himself suspected of collusion with the British against the Khalsa. He died in a skirmish with Sikh troops in May, 1844.

¹³⁷ Suri (1961), 44.

¹³⁸ Griffin and Massy (1909), I, 407.

¹³⁹ Suri (1961), 508.

44 *Misr Beli Ram*

Keeper of the royal *toshakhana* during Ranjit Singh's reign, Beli Ram — 'a devoted and sincere servant of the Sarkar'¹⁴⁰ — had the difficult task of maintaining a balance between Ranjit Singh's instinctive parsimony and his public exhibitions of largesse. At Ranjit Singh's deathbed, Beli Ram thwarted the Maharaja's instructions to yield the Koh-i-noor to the Jagannath temple by obstinately pretending that he had left the diamond behind in Amritsar. Beli Ram's younger brother, Misr Makraj, recounted the circumstances for Dr John Login ten years later in the following words: 'Raja Dhyan Singh, Wazeer, sent for Belee Ram, and stated that the Maharaja had expressed, by signs, that he wished the Koh-i-Noor to be given away in charity (the Maharajah being then speechless). Misr Belee Ram objected, saying, that "it was only fit to be possessed by a king! and to whom could it be given in charity?" Raja Dhyan Singh said "to the Brahmins at Juggernaut". But Belee Ram objected to this, stating that it ought to remain with the Maharajah's descendants, and that already twenty-one lakhs of rupees, and jewels, and gold, etc., had been given away to the Brahmins. He thus exposed himself to the greatest enmity on the part of Raja Dhyan Singh.'¹⁴¹

Not surprisingly, Beli Ram was imprisoned as soon as Dhian Singh gained control at Court. He was restored by Sher Singh on his accession, and needless to say, lost his office yet again the day after Sher Singh's death. Shortly thereafter, Hira Singh's men killed Misr Beli Ram together with his brother Ram Kissan and Bhai Gurmukh Singh (No. 42) in the cool basement of Sheikh Imamuddin's house in Lahore.

45 *A jewel-carrier*

Misr Beli Ram's assistant is depicted carrying a tray of jewels, conspicuous amongst which are the Koh-i-noor set in an amulet, tassels of rubies, an elongated emerald *sarpesh* (turban ornament), the bunch of grapes composed of emeralds and other gems that Schoefft painted in larger detail on Sher Singh's spectacular portrait (Colour Plate II).

46 *Pur Singh*

Schoefft's notes describe him as a brother of Budh Singh (No. 16).

¹⁴⁰ Suri (1961), 189.

¹⁴¹ Login (1890), 197.

47 *Bhai Mia Singh*

A Sikh priest, who impressed Schoefft with his 'beautiful white beard'.

48 *Munshi*

The scribe at the Sikh Court employed to write and record in Persian, the official language used for correspondence and State business.

49 *Lal Singh*

Commander of the Sikh Irregular Cavalry.

50 *Akalis*

In the catalogue notes, Schoefft gives fewer lines on the Akalis than the number of blows he received at their hands in 1841. Lt-Colonel Steinbach gave a fuller account of this unique band of blue brigands. 'In addition to the regular and irregular army, the Lahore government has also in its pay a body of irregular cavalry (to the number of between two and three thousand) called Akalees. They are religious fanatics, who acknowledge no ruler or laws but their own; think nothing of robbery or even murder, should they happen to be in the humour for it—Runjeet Singh himself having on more than one occasion narrowly escaped assassination by them. They are, without any exception, the most insolent and worthless race of people under the sun. They move about constantly armed to the teeth, insulting everybody they meet particularly Europeans, and it is not an uncommon thing to see them riding about with a drawn sword in each hand, two more in their belt, a matchlock at their back, and three or four quoits fastened round their turbans. The quoit is an arm peculiar to this race of people. It is a steel ring, varying from six to nine inches in diameter, and about an inch in breadth, very thin, and the edges ground very sharp. They throw it with more force than dexterity; but not so (as alleged) as to be able to lop off a limb at sixty or eighty yards. In general, the bystanders are in greater danger than the object aimed at. Runjeet Singh did much towards reducing this worthless race of people to a state of subjection; but he only partially succeeded, and latterly, they have become more intolerant than ever. They, however, fight with desperation, and are always employed on the most dangerous service'.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Steinbach (1846), 104–105.

51 *Irregular cavalry*

'The *irregulars*, in their dress and appointments, fully justify the appellation which their habits and mode of making war obtained for them. Cotton, silk, or broad cloth tunics of various colours, with the addition of shawls, cloaks, breast-plates, or coats of mail, with turbans or helmets, *ad libitum*, impart to them a motley but picturesque appearance. They are all badly mounted'.¹⁴³

Steinbach gave further particulars of their pay. 'The troops of the irregulars receive twenty-five rupees each, out of which they provide their arms and clothing and feed their horses, putting the government to no other expense whatever for their services.'¹⁴⁴

52 *Regular infantry*

Commenting on their dress, Steinbach wrote: 'The costume of the regular infantry is scarlet, with different coloured facings, to distinguish regiments, as in the British service. The trousers are of blue linen; the head-dress is a blue turban, with one end loose, and spread so as to entirely cover the head, back of the neck and shoulders; the belts are of black leather; the arms a musket and bayonet, the manufacture of Lahore.'¹⁴⁵

The long pikes held by the infantry were often decorated. Prince Soltykoff purchased such a one 'painted with flowers, and figures of women and Indian deities.'¹⁴⁶

53 *Servants*54 *Two war orphans*

These two young orphans were the children of Sikh sardars who had fallen in battle. Emily Eden first noticed them with Ranjit Singh and observed that 'he always has these children with him, and has married them to each other. They were crawling about the floor, and running in and out between Runjeet and G., and at one time the little boy had got his arm twisted around G.'s leg.'¹⁴⁷ To an unmarried forty-one-year-old spinster (and a Victorian one at that) these children

¹⁴³ Steinbach (1846), 95.

¹⁴⁴ Steinbach (1846), 96.

¹⁴⁵ Steinbach (1846), 95.

¹⁴⁶ Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 93.

¹⁴⁷ Eden (1866), I, 285.

violated the primary rule by being not only seen but also heard and felt. Seeing them again when calling on Ranjit Singh some days later she bristled with irritation at their behaviour and that of their bibulous guardian: 'Those two little brats, in new dresses, were crawling about the floor, and he poured some of this fire down their throats'.¹⁴⁸

Schoefft believed that they received half their fathers' income until they reached the age of fifteen, and if still alive after Ranjit Singh's questionable supervision beyond that age, they were entitled to the whole revenue.

55 *Royal falconer*

56 *Horse-dealer from Kandahar*

57 *Servants and bodyguard*

58 *The gate-keepers*

Servants of Labh Singh (No. 11), they controlled admittance to the Royal palaces.

59 *Horses*

Both Ranjit Singh and Sher Singh were passionately fond of horses. The old Maharaja's obsession for 'Laila', the mare belonging to Sardar Yar Muhammad, 'cost him 60 lakhs of rupees, and 12,000 soldiers, having been the occasion of several wars', as he boasted to Hugel.¹⁴⁹

Sher Singh emulated Ranjit Singh's possessive pride in his caparisoned horses before Prince Soltykoff, who wrote in March 1842, 'To let us see his horses they were brought in one by one, by a narrow door on to this terrace, with their eyes covered. The first was a Sikh horse, a huge animal with a curved nose, such as one sees in pictures of mediaeval warfare. Its bridle was covered with pearls and huge emeralds; the saddle was of gold and the pommel was an emerald as big as an apple. Just as it was, with all these luxurious trappings the King sent it into the tank; the water only reached to its knees, but the excited animal plunged so much that the magnificent saddle cloth was soaked. In the meantime another horse was

¹⁴⁸ Eden (1866), I, 297.

¹⁴⁹ Hugel (1846), 333.

brought in, a white animal, also very large, with its legs painted red to the knees, and tricked out like a woman with chains of gold and huge rubies which hung on its neck, head and chest. Then came a chestnut of great beauty—a perfect animal; and then a number of others together. The King had them all paraded in the water and then brought up to the terrace where we were. There was a confused mass of horses and men, noise and colour, and in this chaos of gold, steel, precious stones, silk, velvet, and Kashmir shawls, the King appeared a simple individual on an equal footing with his courtiers and ourselves.¹⁵⁰

60 *Elephants*

61 *Game*

Both deer and boar still roamed the wild areas near Lahore while Schoefft was in the city and had been hunted regularly over the years by Ranjit Singh and his successors.

As early as December 1816, the official records chronicled that 'the Noble Sarkar rode out for a hunt and came back to the fort at nightfall after hunting two pigs'.¹⁵¹

Twenty-two years later, Osborne (but not Sher Singh) was permitted to use Ranjit Singh's private hunting ground. His diary account for 26 June 1838 reads:

This morning, at sunrise, ordered our elephants, and went out to try and relieve the monotony of our life by a few hours' shooting. Proceeded straight to a rumna, or preserve, of the Maharajah's, which we supposed to abound in wild hog, hares, and black partridges. The Sikhs, in contradiction to the religious tenets of most of the other castes in India, are very fond of pork, and Runjeet cultivates grain and sugarcane round this preserve for the wild hog who frequent it to feed upon. Beef is as much a forbidden food in the Punjab as pork is in Hindostan to the natives; and to kill a cow across the Sutlege would subject the perpetrator of the deed to almost certain death. We found a considerable quantity of wild hog, and a few black partridges, in the rumna, and had altogether two hours' very tolerable shooting.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Soltykoff, quoted in Garrett (1935), 98.

¹⁵¹ Garrett and Chopra (1935), 257.

¹⁵² Osborne (1840), 166–167.

Semi-paralysed by then, Ranjit Singh was no longer in a condition to accompany his guest in the field, but his participation in the evening's discussion of the hunt and its bag was typical, as Osborne noticed: 'The Maharajah met our servants returning home with the produce of their sport, and after examining most critically every pig, he counted the number of balls each had received, and when he found one killed by a single shot, asked who killed it, and said, "that was a good shot", whilst to some who had been a good deal mangled, he remarked, "Bad that, very bad". He gave each of the servants ten rupees, and dismissed them with a civil message to us, to go and shoot there whenever we pleased.'¹⁵³

62 *Muslim fakir*

Schoefft's wry closing was to show a Muslim fakir, moving away with disgust from the offensive sight of a wild hog in the foreground.

¹⁵³ Osborne (1840), 168.

APPENDIX I

The Court of Lahore

Archer (1966), 168, dated this painting 'c. 1845-1850'; and Singh (1962), fig. 7, as 'c. 1838', the latter on the assumption that the painting must have been completed during the lifetime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The painting has also been reproduced in Suri (1961), opp. 160, where it has been incorrectly captioned 'A ceremonial Durbar at Hazoori Bagh, Lahore'. Honigberger (1852), 172, presumed that the painting was purchased by King Louis Philippe of France and that the painting in 1852 was kept in Paris. This has been repeated in Archer (1966), 168. Louis Philippe had abdicated in February, 1848, and therefore could hardly have been in a position to purchase this painting when it was exhibited with twenty other paintings by Schoefft in Vienna in 1855. Foster (1930), 94, in a note states that the painting 'was purchased by Prince Duleep Singh, and has been lent by the family to the India Museum at South Kensington'. The original painting was lent to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in 1912 by Prince Frederick Dalip Singh (the second son of Maharaja Dalip Singh) and returned to his sisters, the Princesses Bamba and Catherine Dalip Singh, in 1939. In 1947 it was re-lent to the Museum and finally returned to Princess Bamba in 1955. Two years later, after her death in March 1957 at Lahore, the painting amongst other Sikh relics associated with Dalip Singh's family, were purchased from the Princess's secretary and legatee, Pir Karim Bakhsh Supra, by the Department of Archaeology, Pakistan. After being exhibited for a time in Karachi, it has since then been on permanent display in the New Gallery, Lahore Fort. The painting was never exhibited at the British Museum, as stated in Khan (1961), 7. An incorrect entry in the acquisition lists led to this mis-statement. The copy noted by Garrett (1935), 89, in the Punjab Record Office, is a photographic reproduction.

The Koh-i-noor

Much has been written about the questionable manner in which Ranjit Singh exacted the Koh-i-noor from the deposed Shah Shuja in 1813. The arguments both for and against Ranjit Singh's behaviour have been stated in Singh (1962), 105-109. Its history up to the date of its acquisition by the British was recorded by Fakir Nuruddin at the request of Major G. Macgregor, Deputy Commissioner, Lahore. The information was contained in a letter dated 10 February 1850. The letter itself is in the Punjab University Library.

Less has been written about its subsequent history. It was set by Ranjit Singh as the centre-piece to an amulet, flanked by two lesser diamonds which, according to Hugel (1845), 303, the Maharaja had purchased for 130,000 and 100,000 rupees in Amritsar. They had belonged to Shah Shuja also and would seem to have been acquired by Ranjit Singh, if Hugel is to be believed, with less effort than he spent on the Koh-i-noor.

Burnes (1834), III, 168, judged it to be 'about half the size of an egg'; Osborne (1840), 202, gave more exact measurements 'about an inch and a half in length, and upwards of an inch in width, and stands out from the setting, about half an inch'; Emily Eden (1844), sketched it and reproduced the drawing.

Custody of the stone was taken in 1849 by Dr Login from Misr Makraj, younger brother of Misr Beli Ram and an employee of the royal *toshakhana* for over thirty-two years, who passed to his successor the advice that when showing the Koh-i-noor to visitors it was advisable to hold it in one's own hand and to keep the cords twisted about one's fingers as an additional precaution. Obviously, Shah Shuja had been no pupil of Misr Makraj's.

The stone was despatched to England despite Sir John Lawrence's momentary carelessness in forgetting it in his waistcoat pocket. It arrived there in 1850 and was shown at the Great Exhibition a year later. The stone was re-cut on the orders of Queen Victoria, to whom it had been presented by the East India Company, and reduced from its original size of 186 to 106 carats. It was used by her

sometimes separately as a brooch or set in a circlet specially designed for it.

After her death in 1901, the Koh-i-noor was used in the coronation crowns of Queen Alexandra, consort of Edward VII, in 1902; Queen Mary, consort of George V, in 1911; and of Queen Elizabeth, consort of George VI, in 1937. The Koh-i-noor is still in the latter crown which is displayed among the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London. The original amulet containing paste facsimiles is also on display in a side show-case. The amulet and its enamelled reverse have been reproduced in Twining (1960), pls. 70 a and b.

The diamonds formerly flanking the Koh-i-noor are now mounted for use as earrings.

List of Monochrome Illustrations

	PAGE
<i>Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839)</i> . Drawing by G.T.Vigne, Punjab, 1837. India Office Library and Records, London	24
The marble <i>baradari</i> in the Lahore Fort, as it appears today	27
<i>Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839) seated</i> . Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, Lahore, December, 1838. Published: Emily Eden, <i>Portraits of the Princes and People of India</i> (London, 1844), pl. 13. Author's collection	31
<i>A group of Akalis</i> . Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, December, 1838. Published: Emily Eden, <i>Portraits of the Princes and People of India</i> (London, 1844) pl. 5. Author's collection	35
<i>Maharaja Sher Singh (1807–1843)</i> . Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, Lahore, December, 1838. Published: Emily Eden, <i>Portraits of the Princes and People of India</i> (London, 1844), pl. 2. Author's collection	41
<i>Prince Pratap Singh (1831–1843)</i> . Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, Lahore, December, 1838. Published: Emily Eden, <i>Portraits of the Princes and People of India</i> (London, 1844), pl. 19. Author's collection	42
<i>Maharaja Nau Nehal Singh (1821–1840)</i> . Drawing by G.T.Vigne, Punjab, 1837. India Office Library and Records, London	44
<i>The signature in English of Maharaja Sher Singh (1807–1843)</i> . Punjab Records Office, Lahore.	45
<i>The Hazuri Bagh pavilion, Lahore Fort</i> . Lithograph after an original drawing by C.S.Hardinge, Lahore, 1846. Published: C.S.Hardinge, <i>Recollections of India</i> (London, 1847), part I, pl. 11. Author's collection	47
<i>The golden throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839)</i> . Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (Crown copyright reserved)	49
<i>Raja Hira Singh (c. 1816–1844)</i> . Lithograph after an original drawing by Emily Eden, Lahore, December, 1838. Published: Emily Eden, <i>Portraits of the Princes and People of India</i> (London, 1844), pl. 7. Author's collection	54
<i>Sikh Chieftains</i> . Lithograph after an original drawing by Prince A. Soltykoff, Lahore, 1842. Published in A.Soltykoff, <i>Indian Scenes and Characters</i> (London, 1859), pl. 9. Author's collection	55

- Raja Lal Singh, wearing a suit of armour.* Lithograph after an original drawing by C.S.Hardinge, Lahore, February, 1846. Published in C.S. Hardinge, *Recollections of India* (London, 1847), part I, pl. 13. Author's collection 57
- Maharaja Gulab Singh (1792-1857).* Lithograph after an original drawing by C.S.Hardinge, Lahore, February 1846. Published in C.S.Hardinge, *Recollections of India* (London, 1847), part II, pl. 14. Author's collection 59
- A cavalcade of Sikh troops.* Lithograph after an original drawing by Prince A.Soltykoff, Lahore, 1842. Published in A.Soltykoff, *Indian Scenes and Characters* (London, 1859), pl. 8. Author's collection 60
- Rani Jindan (1817-1863).* Drawing by G.Richmond, London, c. 1863. Author's collection 65
- The procession of Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838-1893) returning to the Lahore Fort, February, 1846.* Lithograph after an original drawing by C.S. Hardinge. *Recollections of India* (London, 1847), part I, pl. 9. Author's collection 68
- Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838-1893).* Lithograph after an original drawing by C.S.Hardinge, Lahore, February 1846. Published in C.S.Hardinge, *Recollections of India* (London, 1847), part I, pl. 1. Author's collection 69
- Sir John Spencer Login (1810-1863),* London, c. 1860 73
- Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838-1893).* Painting in oils by George Beechey (1798-1852). Mussoorie, 1852. Lady Broun-Lindsay, Haddington, East Lothian 75
- Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838-1893) riding.* Watercolour by P.C.Trench, Mussoorie, 1853. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort 76
- Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838-1893).* Sketch by Queen Victoria, August, 1854. Royal Archives, Windsor Castle. (Crown copyright reserved) 77
- Prince Alfred, later Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha (1844-1900), and Prince Arthur, later Duke of Connaught (1850-1942), in Indian dress.* Photograph by their father, Prince Albert, c. 1854 78
- Maharaja Dalip Singh (1838-1893).* Sketch by Queen Victoria, July, 1854. Royal Archives, Windsor Castle. (Crown copyright reserved) 79
- Princess Victoria Gouramma (1841-1864).* Engraving after an original painting by Franz Winterhalter, 1852. Author's collection 81
- Maharani Bamba Dalip Singh (1847-1887).* Miniature on porcelain, c. 1864. Royal Collection, Osborne House. (Crown copyright reserved) 86
- Prince Victor Albert Dalip Singh (1867-1918).* Painting in oils by S.Hall, 1879. Royal Collection, Osborne House. (Crown copyright reserved)
- Prince Frederick Dalip Singh (1868-1926).* Photograph, c. 1897. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort 93

- Prince Frederick Dalip Singh (1868–1926)*. Drawing in pastels by B. Ward, c. 1918. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort 94
- Princess Bamba Dalip Singh, later Mrs Sutherland (1869–1957)*. Photograph taken on the occasion of her formal presentation at Court, c. 1887. Princess Bamba Collection, Lahore Fort 95

Bibliography

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Glossary

<i>Akalis</i>	Immortal; name of an extremist Sikh sect	<i>Kardar</i>	Official Agent of Government
<i>Badshahi</i>	Royal	<i>Khalsa</i>	Pure; collective title of Sikh community
<i>Bagh</i>	Garden	<i>Lakh</i>	100,000
<i>Baradari</i>	Open pavilion	<i>Masjid</i>	Mosque
<i>Bhai</i>	Brother; Sikh religious preceptor	<i>Misl</i>	Equal; confederacy
<i>Burchas</i>	Hooligans	<i>Munshi</i>	Scribe
<i>Crore</i>	100 lakhs or 10 million	<i>Nazar</i>	Offering or tribute in cash or kind
<i>Darbar</i>	Royal Court or Levee	<i>Palki</i>	Palanquin
<i>Doshalas</i>	Woollen shawl, paired and sewn back to back	<i>Pandit</i>	Hindu religious preceptor
<i>Dussehra</i>	Autumnal Hindu festival, also celebrated by Sikhs	<i>Pashmina</i>	Wool
<i>Fakir</i>	Poor man or Muslim ascetic; as a title signifying one 'poor in the eyes of God'	<i>Quran</i>	Holy Book of the Muslims
<i>Feranghees</i>	Foreigners, particularly Europeans	<i>Raja</i>	Ruler or prince
<i>Ghorcharas</i>	Mounted bodyguard	<i>Rani</i>	Queen; royal consort
<i>Granth</i>	Holy Book of the Sikhs	<i>Sadhu</i>	Hindu ascetic
<i>Gurus</i>	Teachers or spiritual guides	<i>Samadh</i>	Cenotaph
<i>Haveli</i>	Mansion	<i>Sardar</i>	Chief
<i>Jagir</i>	Form of land tenure with right to collect revenue	<i>Sarpesh</i>	Turban ornament
<i>Kanwar</i>	Crown or senior prince	<i>Suttee</i>	Rite of widow-burning; wife who immolates herself with husband's corpse
		<i>Toshakhana</i>	Royal treasury
		<i>Vakil</i>	Lawyer
		<i>Wazir</i>	Senior or prime Minister
		<i>Zenana</i>	Female establishment

Index

*Italic numerals refer to illustrations;
bold numerals refer to biographies.*

- Abingdon House 64
Aden 88, 91
Agerola 125, 127
Agra 21
Ajit Singh Sindhanwalia 36, 39, 49-50, 53, 104, 108, 109
 portraits 28, 108n, *XII (15)*
Akalis 14, 26, 30, 32, 36, 140
 portraits *I, X (50), 35*
Albert, Prince Consort 77-78, 80, 87
Albert Edward (later Edward VII) 78, 78n, 82, 89n, 150
Alexander III, Czar 89n
Alexandra, Queen (consort of Edward VII) 82, 89n, 150
Alexandria 87n, 118
Alfred, Prince 78, 78n, 79, 79
Ali Khan 109
 portrait *XII (18)*
Allard, Achilles 114
Allard, Charlotte 124n
Allard, J. F. 113-114, 120, 125, 128, 133
 portraits 29, 124-125, *XVI (30)*
Allen, Dr 115
alms 37, 50, 139
American Mission School 77, 85
Amir Singh Sindhanwalia 137
Amritsar 14, 22, 25, 30, 32, 37
Anarkali, tomb of 129
Anne Dalip Singh 91
Annexation of the Punjab 14, 70, 117
arabic 86, 107, 113, 133
Archer, M. 17
Archer, W. G. 15, 17, 23n, 71n
Arjan, Guru 37, 37n
 samadh of 37n; verses of 37
Arjan Singh 111
arrears in pay 47, 122, 131
Arthur, Prince 79, 78
Atar Singh 112
Attar Singh Kallianwalla 70
Attar Singh Sindhanwalia 49, 112-113, 137-138
 portraits 29, *XVII (43)*
Attock 122, 136
Auckland, Lord 23n, 36-37, 48n, 108, 111, 124, 137
Aurangzeb, Emperor 66
Avitabile, P. B. 113, 115, 122, 125-128, 136
 portraits 29, *XVI (31)*
Azizuddin, Fakir 15, 30, 99n, 106-108, 115, 117, 129, 133
 portraits 23n, 28, 107, *XV (14)*
Badshahi Masjid, Lahore 27, 66
Baghdad 113
Bahadur Shah Zafar 21, 21n
Bahawalpur 119
Bamba, Maharani 86-87, 87n, 88, 90
 portrait 86
Bamba, Princess (Mrs Sutherland) 13, 16, 87n, 95, 96, 147
baptism 74, 117
Barr, W. 124, 124n, 125, 133-134
Basawa Singh 108, 138
Batala 46, 110-111
Beas river 58
Beechey, G. 14, 74, 74
Beli Ram 53, 105, 139, 149
 portraits 29, *XVII (44)*
Benares 58, 105, 134
Bentinck, W. 123
Bhajan Lal 74
Bhyrowal 66n, 70, 82
Bible 74, 77
bodyguards 142, *XIII (58), XIV (57)*
Bombay 118
Bombay Mission 63n
Bright Star of the Punjab, order of 125
British Army 43, 58
British Customs Office, Panipat 118n
British Museum, London 147
Brune, Marshal 120
Buckingham Palace, London 48n, 77, 80n
Budapest 13
Budh Singh 108-109, 139
 portrait *XII (16)*
Budh Singh Sindhanwalia 112-113, 137
Burnes, A. 13, 43, 85n, 114, 122, 132, 136

- Cairo 77
 Calcutta 21, 64, 74, 84, 124
 Calcutta Courier 22
 newspapers 107, 127
 Cambridge 91
 Canning, Lord 62, 85
 Catalogue
 Schoefft Exhibition 1855 17, 28, 99, 99n, 147
 Princess Bamba Collection 21n, 51n, 80n, 91n, 147
 Catherine Dalip Singh 94, 147
 Cawnpore 21
 cavalcade of Sikhs 61
 Cavalry 118, 121-123, 129, 140-141
 Irregular Cavalry 27, 141, X (51)
 Chand Kaur, Rani 27, 39, 46, 101, 138
 Chand Kaur, wife of Tara Singh 40n, 50n
 Chattar Singh Attariwala 72
 daughter of 72
 Chekov, A. 17
 Chellianwala, battle of 14
 Chet Singh 45
 Chiraghuddin, Fakir 119
 portrait XII (29)
 Chunar Fort 23, 60, 61n, 62n, 64
 Cis-Sutlej campaign 1807 39
 Clarendon, Lord 83
 Clerk, G. 108
 coat-of-arms 79
 Coley, J. 117
 conversion to Christianity 63, 74
 Coorg, Raja of 72
 daughters of 72, 80; *see also* Victoria Gouramma
 Council of Regency 70, 106, 133
 Court, A. 113, 122, 126, 136-137
 portrait 29, XVII (40)
 Court of Directors 77, 82-84, 87
 Court of Lahore 16-17, 23-29, 99, 135, 147, IX
 detailed in X-XVII; *see also* Schoefft, A. T.
 cremation 45, 50, 53, 64, 103, 116, 131
 Crime 79, 118
 Crystal Palace Exhibition 1851 149
 Currie, F. 68
 cypher 106n
- Dalhousie, Marquess of
 correspondence 72-73, 76, 77, 80, 87, 89, 91
 Dalip Singh 14, 16-17, 32
 accession 67; and Albert, Prince Consort 77, 79, 87; birth 52, 66; and British Government 87; character 83-84; children 88, 90-91, 94, 96; coat-of-arms 79; and Dalhousie, Marquess of 74, 76-77, 80, 80n, 87; death 90; deposed 70; and East India Company 77, 82-84, 87; education 71; engagement 72; as G.C.S.I. 87, 90; horoscope 66; interests 13, 71-72, 84, 87; and Jawahir Singh 67-68; jewels 69, 87; and Jindan, Rani 51-52, 60-64, 66, 80, 85; letter to *The Times* 87-88; and Login, J. 22n, 71, 84-85; marriages 80, 85, 86, 90n; motto 79; paternity 52, 74; pension 71, 89, 117; portraits 62, 66, 69, 69, 74, 75, 76, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 82n, 87, III, VI, VII, VIII; purchases Elveden Hall 87; religion 68, 74, 83, 85, 88; sculpture 80; and Queen Victoria 77-79, 82-83, 90-91; and Victoria Gouramma 72, 80; visits 71, 72, 74, 77, 84-85, 87-88, 89-90
 Darbar Sahib *see* Golden Temple, Amritsar
 Dar-el-Shefas 117
 Dasuha 40n
 De la Font 29, 119, XII (28)
 De la Roche 29, 118, XII (27)
 Delhi 21
 Department of Archaeology, Pakistan 17, 147
 Dera Ghazi Khan 115
 Dera Ismail Khan 131
 Desa 50n
 Dewan Chand 109
 Dharam Kaur 40n, 50n
 Dhian Singh 23, 52, 102, 103-104, 124
 portraits of 28, 49, XV (8); murder of 104, 108, 137; and Nau Nehal Singh 46, 116; Ranjit Singh 107, 122, 132, 139; and Sher Singh 47, 50, 53, 138
 Dial Singh Moranwala 111
 diarists 50, 53, 99, 143
 Dina Nath 29, 56, 70, 106
 portrait 28, XV (13)
 Disraeli, B. 82, 88
 door keepers 105
 duel 130
 Dussehra festival 25, 25n
- East India Company 48n, 77, 82-84, 87, 127, 149
 Ecole Polytechnique 136
 Eden, Emily 21, 36, 45, 106, 108, 112, 124, 141
 portraits by 16, 23n, 31, 35, 41-42, 54
 Eden, Fanny 61n, 108, 124
 Edward VII, *see* Albert Edward, Prince
 Edward Dalip Singh 90, 84
 Edwardes, H. 132
 elephants 25, 138, 143
 Elizabeth, Queen (consort of George VI) 150
 Elveden 87, 90
 emeralds 48, 48n, 112, 139, 142
 engraving 81
 Eton 91
- falconers 14, 142, XVII (55)
 Fane, Sir H. 43
 Fateh Bukhsh 118
 Fatehgarh 71-72
 feranghees 33, 99, 122, 126

- Ferozepur 62, 108, 137
 Feroze Shah, battle of 14, 105, 118
 Foulkes 129–130
 portrait 29, *XVI* (33)
 Frederick III, Emperor 91
 Frederick Dalip Singh 91, 94, 147
 portrait 93
 frescoes 26n
 Frith, W. P. 28n, 82n
 game 27, 143, *IX*
 Gardner, Col. A. 50–52, 56, 67, 99, 103–104, 116, 125, 135
 gate keepers 105, 142, *XIII* (58)
 General Proclamation (20 August 1847) 60
 George V 150
 George VI 150
 Ghaus, Ghulam Mohammad 21
 Ghulam Mohyuddin 108
 Ghulam Mohyuddin Khan 40
 Gladstone, W. E. 87
 Golden Temple, Amritsar (also Darbar Sahib) 14, 26, 32–33, 36, 37, *I*
 golden throne of Ranjit Singh 49, 49
 Goldingham, Capt. 14, 87, *VIII*
 Govindgarh Fort 106
 Govind, Guru 100
 Govind Ram 37
 Grand Hotel, Paris 89
 Grasse 89, 136–137
 Gujrat, battle of 14
 Granth 26, 30, 32, 37n
 Gulab Singh 57, 101, 102, 106, 131, 138
 gains Kashmir 58, 70, 105, 117; portraits 24, *XIV* (5), 59; ransacks toshakhana 46, 46n;
 relations with Sikhs 56, 68
 gun-powder manufacture 115, 117
 Gurmukh Singh 22, 33, 33n, 34, 53, 137, 139
 portraits 29, *I*, *XVII* (42)
 Hall, S. 92
 hanging 121, 126
 Hardinge, C. 16
 sketches by 47, 57, 59, 68–69
 Hardinge, H. 16, 68, 82, 117
 Haridas, the fakir 29, 105, 134–136
 portraits 135, *XVI* (39)
 hawks 32, 71
 hawking 71, 84
 Hazara campaign 1820 43
 Hazuri Bagh, Lahore 16, 47, 47, 55, 116, 147
 Heera Singh 51
 Hira Singh 46, 53, 104, 107–108
 as favourite 30, 53n, 103; portraits 28, 30, *XV* (9), 54; as Wazir 55, 67, 137–139
 hogs 143–144
 Honigberger, M. 13, 21, 23, 99, 113–117, 135n
 and Avitabile, P. B. 113, 126; comments on Fakir brothers 116–117, 133; dispenses medicines 114–115, 117, 133; family of 117, 131; hosts Schoefft, A. T. 13, 22, 116–117, 136; makes opiates 115, 133; manufactures gun-powder 115, 117; and Mouton, F. H. 117–118; patients of 114, 116, 119, 126; pension 117; portrait 29, *XII* (25); recounts attack on Schoefft, A. T. 26n, 32–34, 36; and Steinbach, H. 131; visits Punjab 113, 115
 Horoscope 66
 horse-dealer 142, *XVII* (56)
 horses 25, 46n, 142
 Hotel de la Tremouille, Paris 90
 Hugel, C. 13, 109, 123, 126, 128, 142, 149
 Hyderabad, Sind 113
 Ibrahim Khan 110, *XII* (21)
 Imamuiddin, Fakir 15, 106
 Imamuiddin, Sheikh 58, 105, 108, 139
 Indian Mutiny 1857 83, 132
 Indus river 122
 Infantry 121, 129, 141
 Regular Infantry 141, *X* (52)
 Irregular Cavalry *see* Cavalry
 Jacquemont, V. 13, 104–115, 120, 122, 124, 133
 Jagannath temple 37, 139
 Jah, Prince Azim 21
 Jai Singh Kanheya 40
 Jalla 56, 67, 117, 137
 Jammu 55, 102, 114, 117, 132
 Jawahir Singh 51, 55–56, 60, 67, 117
 Jawala Singh Padhani 112
 jewels 46n, 48n, 60, 71n
 carrier of 139, *XVII* (45)
 Jindan Rani 14, 17, 23, 50, 134
 birth 51; character 57–58; and Dalip Singh 51–52, 60, 62–64, 66, 80, 85; death 64; and Dhir Singh 52; escape to Nepal 62; expenses 61n; and Gulab Singh 56, 58; and Hira Singh 53n, 55; and Jawahir Singh 51, 56, 60; jewels 60, 64; and Lal Singh 55–56, 58–60, 105; and Login, J. 85; and Login, Lady 63–64; marriage 52n; portraits of 51, 64, 65, *V*; and Ranjit Singh 52–53; as Regent 56, 58; removed 60–61, 134
 Kangra 43
 Karachi 113–114
 Kashmir 16, 46, 58, 102, 117, 131–133
 Kashmiri wives 125, 137
 Kensal Green Cemetery, London 64
 Kepiro Utea (Street of Painters) 13
 Khalifa 133
 Khalsa 47, 55–57, 67, 100, 129, 138
 Khanpur 131

INDEX

- Kharak Singh 23, 25, 27, 66, 101, 109; death 45-46; marriage 40; and Nau Nehal Singh 101; portraits 30, *I, XIV* (2); and Sher Singh 43, 45; wife, Chand Kaur 23, 27, 39, 46
- Khairpur, Sind 113
- Khushwant Singh 39n
- Koh-i-noor 30, 37, 46, 48, 70, 139, 149
- re-cut 82, 149
- Krishna 26
- Kronstadt 33, 113
- Kulu 118
- Labh Singh 105, 142
- portraits 105n, *XV* (11)
- Lahore
- Bazar Hakiman 108; Dabbi Bazar 55; Governors of 128, 133; Gulberg Christian Cemetery 96; Jail Road 96; model town 96; Madho Lal Hussain, shrine of 109; Masti Gate 56; views of 16, 117
- Lahore Fort 16, 26, 37, 39, 53, 71
- Baradari 16, 26, 28-29, 27; Kala Burj 26; Khilat Khana 26; Khwabgah 52; Moti Masjid 27; New Gallery 16, 51n, 147; Quadrangle of Jahangir 52; Shrine of Chand Kaur 27; Summan Burj 26, 52, 56, 60
- Lahore Museum 133n
- Laila, the mare 142
- Lal Singh, Commander 27, 140, *X* (49)
- Lal Singh, Raja 28, 55-56, 58, 105, 133
- portraits 105n *XV* (12), 57
- Lancaster Gate 63
- Lawrence H. 51, 58, 60, 68, 71-72, 131
- Lawrence, J. 149
- Le Voltaire 51n
- Legion of Honour, order of 118, 125
- Lehna Singh Majithia 29, 36, 118
- Lehna Singh Sindhanwalia 49-50, 112-113, 137
- portrait *XI* (24)
- lithographs 16, 23-24, 31, 35, 41-42, 47, 54-55, 57, 59, 61, 68-69, 80, 135n
- Lochleven Castle 62
- Login, J. 22n, 49n, 53n, 63, 149
- appointed tutor 22n, 71; correspondence 62n, 66n, 71, 71n, 72, 74, 76, 80n, 84-85, 87; as Governor of Lahore Fort 22n, 71; meets Rani Jindan 85; portrait 73; retirement 84
- Login Lady 62n, 66n, 72, 74, 82, 87, 89
- Louis Philippe of France 124, 127, 147
- Ludhiana 129
- Luliani 68
- Macgregor, Major, G. 61n, 149
- McNaughten, W. H. 111, 121
- Madras 21
- Madras Presidency 88
- Maha Singh 100
- Makraj, Misr 139, 149
- Mandi 118, 129-130
- mantra 51
- Marie Feodrovna 89n
- Marochetti, Baron 80, 80n
- Mary, Queen, consort of George V 150
- Mary Queen of Scots 62
- Meerut 72
- Mehar Singh 132-133
- portrait *XVI* (37)
- Mehtab Kaur 39, 39n
- Meka Singh 29, 137 *XVII* (41)
- Mia Singh 140, *XIII* (47)
- Miniatures
- by native artists 69, 71-72, 135; on porcelain 86
- Mirza Jawan Bakht, prince 21
- Mirza Mughal, prince 21
- Misl 40, 100
- Mohammed Khan 109, *XII* (19)
- Moorcroft, W. 120
- Moti Masjid *see* Lahore Fort
- Mouton, F. H. 29, 117, 118
- portrait 29, *XII* (26)
- Mukerian 40, 111
- Mul Raj 62
- Mulla Farash 132
- Muller 86
- Multan 62, 113-115, 132
- rebellion at 62
- Munshi 140, *XIII* (48)
- Muslim fakir 144, *IX*
- Mussoorie 74, 117
- Muzaffar Khan 109
- Nabha 111
- Nanak, Guru 30
- Naples 125, 127
- Napoleon Bonaparte 120, 123, 128, 136
- flag of 123n
- Narayan Singh 112
- Narbada river 64
- native artists 69, 71-72, 135n
- Nau Nehal Singh 101
- accession 101; attitude to Kharak Singh 101; character 43; death 23, 45-46, 116, 138; garden of 33; marriage 43; portraits *XIV* (3), 44; wives 46
- Nazar 24-25
- Nehala 39
- Nepal 62, 64
- New Gallery *see* Lahore Fort
- Nidhan Singh 70
- Norfolk Yeomanry 91
- Nowshera, battle of 128
- Nuruddin, Fakir 15, 23, 60, 70, 106, 117, 133-134, 149

- portraits 29, 133n, *XVI* (38)
 Oliphant, A. 96
 Order of the Star of India 87, 87n, 90
 Osborne, W. G. 21, 25, 48n
 encounters fakir Haridas 134–135; hunts near
 Lahore 143, 145; mission to Ranjit Singh 23,
 111; portraits by 23, 23n, 49n, 135
 Osborne House, Isle of Wight 78, 80n, 83
 Oxford 96

Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum
 17
 painters 26, 69, 71
Paintings of the Sikhs 16
 Pakistan, Government of 13, 16
 Palki 52
 Partab Kaur 50n
 partridges 143
 Patiala 111
 pensions 62, 89, 105, 117
 Persian 50, 71–72, 110, 113, 140
 Peshawar 119, 126–127, 131, 138
 Peshora Singh 56, 67
 Phipps, C. 84, 88
 pikes 41
 Pind Dadan Khan 85
 Poole-Smith, L. 91
 portraits
 drawings 64, 24, 44, 65, 77, 79; engravings 73, 81;
 lithographs 31, 35, 41–42, 54–55, 57, 59, 61, 69; by
 native artists 72; oils I–*XVII*, 75, 92; pastels 94;
 photographs 78, 93, 95; on porcelain 86; water-
 colour 76
Portraits of the Princes and People of India 16
 Pratap Singh 43, 50, 53, 110–111
 portraits 23, 29, *XI* (23), 42
 priests (bhais) 28, 30, 45; see also Govind Ram,
 Gurmukh Singh, Mia Singh
 Prem Kaur 110, 112
 Princess Bamba Collection 13, 16–18, 51
 Prodesse quam conspicui 79
 Punjab Records Office, Lahore 147
 Punjab University Library, Lahore 99n, 149
 Pur Singh 139, *XVII* (46)

 Quoit 140
 Quran 30

 Raj Kaur (Mai Nak Kain) 101, 131
 Ram Kissan 139
 Ram Singh 102, 129 *XIV* (6)
 Ramsay, Col. 63
 Randhawa, M. S. 14, 17
 Rani Jindan see Jindan, Rani
 Ranjit Singh 13, 15, 23, 26–27, 99, 105, 124,
 126–127, 130, 134–135
 and Akalis 32, 36, 140; birth 100; campaigns
 39, 109, 128; career 100–101; character 30–31;
 and courtiers 15, 24, 28, 30, 36, 49, 103,
 106–107, 108, 132; cremation 53n, 103, 131;
 death 23, 38, 45, 106, 119, 129, 139; eye 30, 38,
 123; and Hira Singh 28, 103–104; at Golden
 Temple, Amritsar 16, 30, 1; golden throne 49;
 and grand-sons 43, 101, 110–111; as guardian
 141–142; horses 48, 142; hunting 143–144;
 illnesses 37, 115–116, 144; jewels 30, 37, 48;
 marriages 51n, 101; and mother-in-law 39–40;
 parsimony 123, 129; portraits 16, 24, 28, 49n, 1,
 XIV (1), 24, 31; religious attitudes 14, 29–30,
 102; at Rupar 123; and sons 30, 39–40, 43, 48,
 66, 110, 131; suspicion of foreigners 43,
 120–122, 137; wives 39, 51, 51n, 52
The Real Ranjit Singh 15
Recollections of India 16
 Reconversion ceremony 88n
 Regent 56, 58
 Regular Infantry see Infantry
 Richmond, C. 14, 64
 Ross, Lt. Gen. 91
 Runjodh Singh 70
 Rup Lal 118
 Rupar 123

 Sada Kaur 39, 39n, 47, 112
 Saharanpur 72
 salt mines 85n
 Samson Agonistes 74
 Sant Singh 33n
 Sarpesh 139
 St Petersburg 23, 136
 St Tropez 120, 125
 Schoefft, A. J. 14, 116–117, 136, 144
 career 13, 21–23; *Der Hof von Lahor* 16–17,
 23–29, 99, 135, 147, *IX* detailed in *X–XVII*;
 encounter with Akalis 32–34, 36; portraits by
 21–22, 30, 32, 48, 51–52, 66, *I–V*; wife 13, 22
 Schoefft, J. 13
 sculpture 80
 servants 141–142, *XVII* (53)
 Shah Abbas 120
 Shah Bilawal, garden of 39, 45, 50, 50n, 112, 116,
 138
 Shah Shuja 149
 diamonds of 149
 Shahzada Deo 72
 mother of 72
 Shalimar Gardens, Lahore 25–26, 60
 Sham Singh Attariwala 29, 132, 132n, *XVI* (36)
 Shamser Singh Sindhanwalia 70
 shawls 46n, 70, 116, 123, 132
 merchant of 118

- Sheikhupura 51n, 60, 130
 fortress of 60
- Sher Singh 13-15, 22-23, 26, 30, 43, 48, 66, 131
 accession 46, 138-139; and Ajit Singh Sindhan-
 walia 28, 39, 49, 50, 108; assassination 50, 67,
 105, 116, 127, 137; biography 39-50, 110; birth
 39; campaigns 43; and Chand Kaur 39, 46, 49;
 character 43, 45, 143; cremation 50n; and
 Dhian Singh 28, 46-47, 49-50, 53; and Hira
 Singh 28; interests 27, 47, 110, 142-143; jewels
 48, 48n; and Kharak Singh 43, 43n, 45;
 marriages 40, 110; and Nau Nehal Singh 43,
 45; paternity 22, 39, 43, 110; portraits 22, 30n, *I*,
II, *IV*, *XI* (22), 41; pro-European leanings 22,
 43, 45; and Ranjit Singh 30, 39, 43, 45, 110;
 and Sada Kaur 39-40; and Schoefft, A. T.
 22-23, 32, 48; signature in English 45, 45; sons
 of *see* Pratap Singh and Shahzada Deo; and
 Tara Singh 39, 50n; wives 50n, 71-72, 110, 112
- Sher Singh Attarwala 70
 signature of Sher Singh 45
- Sikh Chieftains 25, 55
- Sikh wars
 First 104, 131
 Second 70, 109
- Simla 127
- Sind 113
- Sobraon, battle of 58, 117-118, 132
- Solykoff, A. 21n, 22, 23n, 48, 54, 117, 141-142
 drawings by 55, 61
- Soortoo 63, 63n
- Sophia Dalip Singh 80, 94
- Steinbach, H. 50n, 99, 101, 107, 135, 130-131,
 140
 portrait 29, *XVI* (34)
- Suchet Singh 23, 55, 102-103, 114
 portrait 28, *XV* (7)
- Sukh Lal 132
- Sultan Mohamed Khan, 109
 portrait 28, *XII* (17)
- Summan Burj *see* Lahore Fort
- Supra, Pir Karim Baksh 13, 96, 147
- Suri, Sohan Lal 102, 129
- Sutherland, Col. 13, 96
- Sutlej, river 56, 111, 130, 132, 138
- Suttee 50, 53, 131, 132n
- Syed Ahmad revolt 43
- Tara Singh 39-40, 40n, 50
- Tej Singh 70, 104-105
 portrait *XV* (10)
- Tel-el-Kabir 88
- Thanesar 138
- Tibet 132
- The Times* 70, 87-88
- Toshakhana 23, 29, 46n, 49, 105-106, 139, 149
- Tower of London 150
- Treaty of Amritsar (16 March 1846) 105
- Treaty of Lahore (8 March 1846) 58, 117, 133
- Trench, P. C. 76, 76
- Udham Singh 101
 portrait *XIV* (4)
- Van Cortlandt, H. C. 131
 portrait 29, *XVI* (35)
- Vansittart, Mrs M. A. 104n
- Ventura, J. B. 110, 113, 115, 118, 122, 124, 129,
 130, 134, 137
 character 128; daughter 129; harem 129;
 marriage 129; portrait 29, *XVI* (32); titles
 128-129
- Victor Dalip Singh 91
 portrait 92
- Victoria, Princess (consort of Frederick III) 91
- Victoria, Queen
 children of 78, 78n, 91; commissions portrait 80,
 80n; correspondence 77-78, 80, 83; and Dalip
 Singh 77-78, 82, 89-90; and Darbar jewels
 48n, 70, 71n, 82, 89, 149; portrait of 22n;
 proclaimed Queen Empress 88; receives Mah-
 arani Bamba 87; sketches by 14, 77, 79
- Victoria and Albert Museum, London 15, 49,
 147
- Victoria Gouramma 72, 74, 80, 81
- Vienna 13, 16, 99
- Vigne, G. T. 13, 21, 24, 103, 130
 portraits by 24, 44
- Wade, Capt. 43, 111, 119, 129, 135
- Waheeduddin, Fakir 15
- war orphans 14, 141, *I*, *X* (54)
- Ward, B. 94
- Watches 36, 45, 111
- Waterloo, battle of 120, 128
- Wazirabad 126-127
- Wellington, Duke of 127
- Windsor Castle 80
 Royal Mausoleum, Frogmore 80n; St George's
 Chapel 82n
- wine 115, 141, 142
- Winterhalter, F. X. 14, 80, 82
 portraits by *VI*, 81
- wrestlers 50
- Yar Muhammad 142
- Zulfiqar Khan 28, 109-110, *XII* (20)



